ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Reading First

State Application

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

READING FIRST PROGRAM

Number 84.357 in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

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1. Legal Name of Applicant Agency (State Educational Agency): Alaska Department of Education & Early Development	**2. Employer Identification Number (EIN):** 92 – 6001185
3. Applicant Address (include zip): 801 West 10th Street, Suite 200 Juneau, Alaska 99801-1894	**4. Contact Person** Name: Paul R. Prussing Position: Education Specialist II Telephone: 907-465-8721 Fax: 907-465-2989
5. To the best of my knowledge and belief, all data in this application are true and correct. The document has been duly authorized by the governing body of the applicant and the applicant will comply with the attached assurances if the assistance is awarded.	
a. Typed Name and Title of Authorized Representative: Roger Sampson, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development	**b. Tel. No. 904-465-2458**
c. Signature of Authorized Representative:	**d. Date**

ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

The State educational agency (SEA) hereby declares that it has filed the following assurances and certifications with the U.S. Department of Education, and, as of the date of the signature below, reaffirms and incorporates by reference those assurances and certifications with respect to the **Reading First Program**. The SEA certifies that no circumstances affecting the validity of these assurances have changed since their previous filing.

- As applicable, the assurances in OMB Standard Form 424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs), relating to legal authority to apply for assistance; access to records; conflict of interest; merit systems; nondiscrimination; Hatch Act provisions; labor standards; flood insurance; environmental standards; wild and scenic river systems; historic preservation; protection of human subjects; animal welfare; lead-based paint; Single Audit Act; and general agreement to comply with all Federal laws, executive orders and regulations.

- The three certifications in ED Form 80-0013, regarding lobbying, debarment/suspension/ responsibility status, and drug-free workplace. (A copy of the related debarment/ suspension/responsibility assurances that the State is required to obtain from subgrantees and maintain on file (ED Form 80-0014) is attached for the SEA's information.)

- With respect to the Certification Regarding Lobbying, the SEA recertifies that no Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making or renewal of Federal grants under this program; that the SEA shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," when required (34 C.F.R. Part 82, Appendix B); and that the SEA shall require the full certification, as set forth in 34 C.F.R. Part 82, Appendix A, in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers.

The SEA further agrees to:

- The certifications in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) §76.104, relating to State eligibility, authority and approval to submit and carry out the provisions of its State plan, and consistency of that plan with State law.

- The assurances in section 9304 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), in accordance with the SEA's consolidated plan.

Name of Applicant: Alaska Department of Education & Early Development	Program: READING FIRST
Printed Name and Title of Authorized Representative of the State: Roger Sampson, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development	
Signature:	Date:

ABSTRACT

The overall aim of Reading First, which is part of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, is to ensure that all American children learn to read at grade level by the end of third grade.
Underlying Reading First is a fundamental belief that this goal can be achieved by teaching students in kindergarten through grade three to read through systematic instruction in reading programs that are grounded in scientifically based reading research. Reading First establishes a nation-wide commitment to support states and local school districts in their efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of reading instruction for all students.
This application is submitted to the U. S. Department of Education in response to its Request for Applications for the Reading First Program. The estimated state Reading First allocation for Alaska is $2.158 million, 80% ($1.727 million) of which is for subgrants for eligible local school districts and schools and 20% ($431,750) of which is for the state education agency to provide technical assistance and professional development activities to support Reading First schools.
The application narrative describes the Alaska Reading First Plan for improving reading instruction, including an analysis of current reading initiatives and identified gaps, rationale for using scientifically based reading research as the basis for improving K-3 reading instruction, the state's definition of subgrant eligibility, selection criteria for awarding subgrants, the process for awarding subgrants, and the state's professional development plan. The application also describes the state's management and technical assistance plans, the state's evaluation and reporting plans, and the anticipated classroom-level impact of Alaska Reading First.
The Reading First grant will further strengthen Alaska's commitment to having all students become proficient readers.

Guide to Acronyms: the following acronyms are used in the application:

EED	The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development
QSI	Quality Schools Initiative
SBRR	Scientifically Based Reading Research
QSTL	Quality Schools Team Leader
BRI	Beginning Reading Institute
NWREL	Northwest Regional Education Laboratory
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

CONTENTS

Section 1: Improving Reading Instruction in Alaska

This section of the application describes Alaska's plans and strategies for improving reading instruction through the Alaska Reading First initiative. It includes a description of current reading initiatives and identified gaps, the state outline and rationale for using scientifically based reading research, the state definition of subgrant eligibility, the selection criteria for awarding subgrants, the process for awarding subgrants, the state professional development plan, and a description of the integration of proposed Reading First activities with Reading Excellence Act activities.

Part A Current Reading Initiatives and Identified Gaps

A.1 Current Reading Initiatives

Alaska's ability to help build local capacity within schools and communities is inevitably tied to the state's ability to provide leadership and support within a complex educational reform landscape. As a state, Alaska embarked on a statewide systemic educational change agenda in 1991, when the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) began the development of statewide academic standards in ten content areas, including Language Arts. The State Board of Education adopted these content standards, developed through an extensive public process, in 1995. In October of 1996 Alaska became the first state in the nation to hold a statewide education summit. The focus of this summit was on improving the quality of education in Alaska. At the conclusion of this summit, the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) Commissioner Dr. Shirley Holloway commits to developing a result-based system of education based on standards. At the Statewide Literacy Conference Oct. 10, 1997, Gov. Knowles announces his introduction of legislation to accomplish the following goals:

- "*First, mandatory standards for school districts in reading, writing and math.*
- *Second, mandatory testing, starting with a skills profile of children as they enter school, followed by age-group tests beginning at ages 5, 8 and 11. These assessments will prepare students for the high school exit exam.*
- *Third, mandatory remedial action for schools that aren't teaching students the basics. They will be required to help struggling students with programs like summer school, tutoring, night classes and other special programs to make sure our kids have the personal attention they need to compete".*

"These standards are designed to make sure:

- *First, all Alaska students will be competent readers by fourth grade. I believe in the saying: "Before fourth grade, you must learn to read. After that you must read to learn."*
- *Second, students will be competent writers by seventh grade, and*
- *Third, they will be competent in algebra by eighth grade." - Gov. Knowles.*

These are the basic components of the Alaska Quality School Initiative (QSI), which now serves as the framework for education in the state. QSI calls for high student academic standards and assessment; family, school, business and community support for safe, healthy schools; quality professional development; and school excellence standards. Each of these areas has a detailed set of components which districts and schools use to guide local education. Technology is a common thread running through these four major educational areas. Performance standards and

the system of statewide Benchmark and high school qualifying examinations focused on reading, writing and math grew out of this Initiative. Teacher certification was also affected, and by 1998 the State Board of Education had established a requirement that applicants for Alaska teaching certificates be trained in a university program approved by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE guidelines contain language specifically requiring that teacher education programs include research based reading methods.

In June of 1998 the Governor signs into law Senate Bill 36. The QSI portion of the of Senate Bill 36 requires the following:

- **Academic Standards**—Mandated the State Board of Education to adopt academic standards in reading, writing and math at four levels: ages 5–7, 8–10, 11–14 and 15–18. The high school and benchmark exam questions are to measure whether students have met the standards.
- **Alaska Benchmark Examinations**—Mandates the department to assess students at the 3rd, 6th and 8th grades beginning in March 2000, in order for schools to check whether students are meeting the reading, writing and math standards and are on course to pass the high school exam.
- **Developmental Profile**—Requires schools to complete a developmental profile on all entering kindergarten and first grade students.
- **QSI Grant**—Gives school districts additional dollars through the Quality Schools Grant program if they establish plans to adopt standards, intervene with additional services for children who are not meeting the standards, and train educators how to teach students in a results-based system of public education. The QSI Grant program became part of the state's school funding program.
- **School Designators**—Requires the State Board to develop an annual system of rating schools, and designate each school by August 2002 in one of the four categories: distinguished, successful, deficient and in crisis. The categories are to be based on a school's student test scores and other indicators of student performance.
- **School Report Cards**—Requires each school to annually report specific information about student performance to their communities and the State of Alaska beginning July 1, 2000. The information required includes school accreditation status; results of norm-referenced achievement tests; results of state standards-based assessment in reading, writing and mathematics; description of student, parent, community and business involvement in student learning; and rates of student attendance, K–8 retention, grade 7–12 dropout and graduation. The department is required to issue its first school-by-school report card on January 15, 2001

In his 1999 State of the Child Address Governor Knowles reiterated, "*We are at the cutting edge of a wave of education reform sweeping our nation that establishes standards, accountability and consequences. I believe the Quality Schools Initiative is the most profound opportunity for positive change in Alaska's public education system since statehood.*" The Quality Schools Initiative represents a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning in Alaska. To date it has resulted in many important improvements in education generally, and several significant changes that specifically affect reading in Alaska. To list a number of them:

- EED facilitated the development of reading, writing, and mathematics performance standards, based on the adopted content standards.
- All districts have now adopted the reading, writing, and mathematics performance standards and are working toward aligning curricula to these standards. This has helped create a uniform set of expectations and a common language among diverse populations.

- EED contracted with CTB/McGraw Hill to develop a high school graduation qualifying examination, and Benchmark assessments at the 3rd, 6th, and 8th grade levels, based on state performance standards in reading, writing, and math. Administered for the first time in March 2000.
- EED established a toll free line for the public to call with questions about the Quality Schools Initiative, standards and assessments.
- Increased coordination among various agencies and groups including PTA Alaska, NEA Alaska, the Alaska School Boards Association, the Alaska Association of Elementary Principles, Secondary Principles, and School Administrators (AASA), the Fairbanks Native Association and other agencies, in order to establish a parent involvement center within the state educational agency.
- Governor Knowles established a Children's Cabinet in 1994. This Cabinet is made up of the Commissioners of State Departments and agencies who have responsibility for programs which involve children- EED, Health and Social Services, Public Safety, Corrections, the Attorney General, the Lieutenant Governor and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. The Children's Cabinet included among their accomplishments the hosting of the State and regional Education Summits to highlight the need for collaboration in the reforms underway in public schools, and the securing of $26 million funding for classrooms, the largest increase in state support in a decade. They continue to pledge to "focus on accountability, prevention, and collaboration across departments to achieve community-based solutions with communities." At the second Alaska Education Summit in September of 2000, district teams consisting of teachers, parents, administrators and school board members analyzed the initial data from the Benchmark and high school qualifying examinations. It is the intention of EED, to conduct this summit every fall to build data analysis capacity in districts.
- EED established the Alaska Literacy Cadre, to advise the Commissioner, the Governor and Children's Cabinet, and EED staff on matters pertaining to literacy and reading in the state. The Cadre was made up of reading specialists, family literacy program managers, literacy program providers, teachers, school and district administrators, early childhood specialists and program managers, school and public librarians, university professors in Reading and Early Childhood Education, and EED staff. With funding from the Reading First it will be reconstituted to add a technical assistance team consisting of Reading First directors and reading researchers and specialists from other states.
- The State Board of Education, EED, and the Professional Licensure Task Force established a set of professional standards for teachers and administrators based on NCATE.
- The State Board of Education adopted basic skills assessments (the PRAXIS series) as a requirement for certification for all new teachers and administrators.
- EED publishes and releases: "On the Threshold: How your child develops", "Unlocking the Door: Current Research on How Children Read", and "On the Threshold: What families & Educators can do to Help Every Child become a Reader"
- In order to increase the number of instructional leaders with extensive knowledge about reading instruction and assessment, EED coordinates with the University of Alaska in the development of a statewide reading endorsement program.

Through the Quality Schools Initiative, the message to local schools is clear: a unified system of standards and related assessments must be in place to report on student performance on a variety of measures over time. Assessments should be designed to inform, guide and improve instruction as well as to report results to the public. Schools must have detailed knowledge of the practices

in place through such activities as curriculum mapping so that they can plan for the use of strategic assessments designed to accomplish the goals of all interested parties. In this atmosphere of accountability and increased attention to assessment, Department staff must provide the coordination necessary to be sure that districts are in compliance at all levels, and that data are recorded, aggregated, interpreted correctly, and routinely reported to EED and the public.

To further strengthen Alaska's QSI commitment to reading and specifically, scientifically based researched reading (SBRR) programs, EED applied for and received an U.S. Department of Education **Reading Excellence Act grant, *Read Alaska project,*** in August 2001. Given the diversity of Alaska's people and landscape, Read Alaska has many faces, as each district and local school site developed its own Local Reading Improvement Project. Yet each of these plans and projects were based on current, credible, scientifically based research, much of which is presented in the documents already published and distributed by the Department of Education & Early Development. (These documents, "On the Threshold: How Your Child Develops, Birth to Age Five," "Unlocking the Door: Current Research on How Children Learn to Read," and "Opening the Door: What Families and Teachers Can Do to Help Every Child Become a Reader" have been distributed to every teacher, K-12, in the state, school board members, parent organizations, and agencies that serve families and children.).

25 schools in 8 districts received a **Read Alaska** project grant in July of 2002. Each plan included:

- A commitment and detailed plan for the implementation of the professional development program. Each district identified the number of teachers and teacher's aides to participate in the yearlong Read Alaska designed course, as well as teacher leaders to participate in the University of Alaska reading endorsement program, and indicate the LEA's willingness to support development and delivery of the yearlong courses.
- Documentation of the scientifically based research that supports the effectiveness of the selected program, including how it addresses phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension skills.
- A description of the selection and use of curriculum and support materials for reading instruction, and a plan for the implementation of research based practices for all educators and tutors teaching students to read, or assisting in this instruction.
- Plans for informing parents about current research on how children learn to read.
- Plans for the districtwide gathering, management and analysis of reading assessment data. For the initial grant, this clearly articulated the current system, and plans for the future, including the types of reading assessments currently in place and the ways that this data is gathered, managed and analyzed.
- Plans for extending the learning from the Read Alaska professional development program to teachers beyond the K-3 levels.
- Plans for coordinating Read Alaska activities, including the identification or hiring of a full time coordinator, travel to required Read Alaska meetings, facilitation of professional leave and stipends for participating teachers, teachers aides and administrators. (A detailed description of these requirements was included with the application materials).

It also contained:

- Identification of the local organizations involved in supporting reading, and how the district will coordinate efforts among these local organizations in meeting the needs of children and families in their communities.

- Plans for inclusion of public and/or school library programs.
- Plans for partnering with any existing family literacy providers or working toward the establishment of family literacy services in the community, through a program such as Even Start.
- A description of how students with reading difficulties, or potential reading difficulties, will be identified.
- A transition plan for students moving from Head Start or related pre-school programs into kindergarten, with a focus on reading.
- A transition plan for those students requiring extra assistance in moving from kindergarten to first grade.
- A plan for ensuring that students who have specific reading difficulties are not misidentified as special education students.
- An intervention plan designed to assist students in kindergarten to third grade at risk of failing to learn to read and meeting state performance standards in Reading. (This plan included extended reading instruction opportunities, outside school hours and during summer and other school breaks, and additional help to students having difficulty learning to read in the primary grades).
- A transition plan, outlining how the district and schools will maintain the scientifically based reading programs and activities following the completion of Read Alaska project.

The **Read Alaska** Project strengthens the focus of the QSI on SBRR programs.

A.2 Identified Gaps

Alaska has established a strong policy foundation for reading achievement by focusing on student standards, educator standards, program standards, professional development standards, and school standards. The expectations and goals are clearly stated and they are increasingly used as the foundation for teaching and learning in Alaska. Alaska has supported the achievement of these goals and standards through significant investments of its own funds as well as successful applications for federal funds. Some of these funds, such as the Quality Schools / Learning Opportunity Grant program, support statewide reading programs. Other funds (e.g., REA) are used for specific groups of schools and students or for targeted purposes (e.g., professional development modules on early learning, tips for parents). In aggregate, the Alaska QSI provides both a strong record of accomplishment and a solid foundation on which to build for the future. Efforts to improve that foundation will address the following gaps and needs:

- A comprehensive plan for reading improvement in Alaska;
- Consistent use of scientifically based reading research as the foundation for all reading initiatives and programs;
- Coordination and consistent use of scientifically based reading research as the foundation for all professional development including preservice training, continuing professional development and specialist training;
- Assurance that all children at risk of reading failure receive appropriate reading support, (e.g., a strong, effective “safety net”);
- Strong district and school instructional leadership, with special attention to the leaders of high-poverty, low-achieving schools;
- Accountability / Assessments: consistency in the statewide K-2 Reading assessments that includes an increase focus on:

1. Outcome assessments that provide a bottom-line evaluation of the LEA/school effectiveness
2. Screening assessments that determine which students are at risk for reading difficulty and who will need additional help
3. Diagnostic assessments / Professional development to help teachers/paraprofessionals adjust instruction to meet students' instructional skills and needs
4. Progress monitoring assessments to determine if students are making adequate progress or need more intervention to achieve grade level reading outcomes

Alaska will employ a number of strategies to address these gaps, including the following:

- Develop a comprehensive plan for reading improvement that is grounded in scientifically based reading research (SBRR);
- Develop Beginning Reading Institutes that will coordinate all reading professional development and technical assistance across the state;
- Increase the awareness of educators, parents and the public regarding SBRR and its implications for teaching and learning;
- Strengthen quality and consistency of teacher, paraprofessional in-service and preservice professional development that is grounded in SBRR;
- Strengthen the awareness and knowledge of SBRR within the paraprofessional field;
- Increase the capacity of EED to provide statewide technical assistance and support for local implementation of Reading First;
- Provide greater support for and development of leadership in high-poverty, low achieving schools;
- *• Provide a valid and reliable assessment system to monitor progress in the early grades. Prominent among the assessment instruments to be used in the Reading First schools, and eventually statewide are the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The state will also mandate to districts the use of (as indicted in Section IV, table 1, page 119) valid and reliable screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and outcome assessments that, in addition to the DIBELS assessment, ensure that all five components of Reading First are assessed with a common core. The *Analysis of Reading Assessment Instruments K-3 by* Dr. Edward J. Kame'enui, University of Oregon,; Dr. David Francis, University of Houston; Dr. Lynn Fuchs, Vanderbilt University, Dr. Roland H. Good, III, University of Oregon ; Dr. Rollanda O'Connor, University of Pittsburgh; Dr. Deborah C. Simmons, University of Oregon; Dr. Gerald Tindal, University of Oregon; Dr. Joseph Torgesen, Florida State University was used in making this assessment selection. (Section 4, Table I, Page 119 diagnostic assessments)
- Coordinate an integrated system of SBRR program professional development for Principals, teachers, and paraprofessionals;
- Coordinate and strengthen monitoring and accountability measures for reading.

In summary, Alaska has accomplished much in terms of establishing statewide initiatives that are grounded in scientifically based, reading research. Alaska has set a high performance standard for all educators in terms of having all students meeting reading standards. In that regard, Alaska is fully aligned with the goal of having all children at grade level in reading by the end of third grade. Alaska has accomplished much; *Reading First* will afford the opportunity and resources, in conjunction with state and other federal resources, to make that goal attainable by closing the identified gaps.

Part B: State Outline and Rationale for Using Scientifically Based Reading Research

How will the SEA connect the scientifically based reading research to plans for improving K-3 reading instruction?

Rationale for Alaska Reading First

Research supporting the goal that all children will read at or above current grade level standards by the end of Grade 3 is more substantial and convergent than at any time in educational history. The scientific knowledge base of the causes and correlates of reading difficulty and reading success has never been more mature or developed. Syntheses of reading research conducted by the National Research Council (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998), and more recently by the Congressionally commissioned National Reading Panel (2000), provide compelling evidence of the skills and knowledge children need to become successful readers in our alphabetic writing system. Research makes it clear that children must develop and demonstrate proficiency in the "big ideas" (See Kame'enui & Simmons, 1998) of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. These proficiencies are best developed through early, systematic, explicit instruction (National Reading Report, 2000).

Elmore (1996) has addressed the challenges of getting research-based practices implemented and embedded in school settings. Getting research-based innovations to scale requires determining (a) how knowledge is defined, (b) how teachers relate to students regarding knowledge, (c) how teachers relate to other teachers in their daily work, (d) how students are grouped for instruction, (e) how time and content are allocated, and (f) how students' work is assessed.

Nor is the difficulty of getting to scale a failure of supplying schools with new ideas about what to do and how to change. The supply of ideas is voluminous and has created a more unanticipated problem in which numerous ideas are implemented without adequate evidence that improved learning is likely to result. Fortunately, in the area of beginning reading, the scientific evidence is more substantial than ever before to guide our instructional innovations (Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow et al., 1998).

According to Elmore (1996), the difficulty of getting educational innovations to scale is not because schools are resistant to change. In fact, schools are "constantly changing—adopting new curricula, tests, and grouping practices, changing schedules, creating new mechanisms for participation in decision-making, adding or subtracting teaching or administrative roles, and myriad other modifications" (p. 4). Rather than getting research-based innovations to scale, Elmore (1996) observed that schools end up minimizing significant reforms by creating cursory structures (e.g., new administrative structures are introduced, additional personnel are hired) around the very "core of educational practice" they are attempting to change.

To change the comprehensive of educational practice requires "understanding the conditions under which people working in schools seek new knowledge and actively use it to change the fundamental processes of schooling" (Elmore, 1996, p. 4). This requires (a) connecting the "big ideas" from the research base on beginning reading with the fine grain of practice; (b) pushing hard in a few strategic places in the system of relations surrounding the problem, then carefully observing the results; (c) creating strong professional and social normative structures for good teaching; (d) embracing and promoting the perspective that successful teaching is not an individual, idiosyncratic trait, but a set of learned professional competencies acquired over the course of a career; (e) finding the connective tissue to bind teachers together in a relationship of

mutual obligation that supports them in sorting out issues of practice; and (f) harnessing the institutional incentives in ways that lead to the improvement of practice. In later sections of our Reading First Application, we examine the intricacies of the host environments.

Although the research is compelling, many schools and school districts in Alaska and throughout the United States are not benefiting from the translation of scientific knowledge in beginning reading instruction into classroom practice where it substantially improve children's reading ability. In other words, many children are not experiencing the application of this research in the classroom. Further, children from minority backgrounds, English-language learners, children who enter school with impoverished language development or without having experienced the breadth of school-related literacy opportunities that are commonplace in the majority of middle-class households, disproportionately fail to become successful, imaginative, competent, and fluent readers by the end of Grade 3.

Lack of success in translating this research into classroom settings has dire consequences for the state of reading proficiency in this country. For example, an estimated 20% of students will encounter serious reading difficulty or reading disability in school (Lyon, 1998). Another 20% will struggle with reading to the point that it significantly hinders their enjoyment of reading (Lyon, 2001). Based on Alaska State benchmark assessments, this 20% is an underestimate of Alaska needs. See figure A.

Figure A: Alaska SPRING 2002 BENCHMARKS GRADE 3

Total Numbers and Percentages of Students
Scoring Above and Below Proficiency

Subject	Test Year	Advanced/Proficient Count	Advanced/Proficient Percentage[1]	**Below/Not Proficient Count**	**Below/Not Proficient Percentage[1]**	October 1 Enrollment	Participation Rate[2]
READING	2000	7,220	72.5%	2,740	**27.5%**	10,706	93.0%
	2001	7,065	71.2%	2,855	**28.8%**	10,700	92.7%
	2002	7,133	74.6%	2,431	**25.4%**	10,011	95.5%

Total Numbers and Percentages of Students
Scoring Above and Below Proficiency
by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

READING	Advanced/Proficient Count	Advanced/Proficient Percentage[1]	**Below/ Not Proficient Count**	**Below/ Not Proficient Percentage[1]**	October 1, 2001 Enrollment	Participation Rate[2]
Alaska Native	1,160	49.7%	1,175	**50.3%**	2,484	94.0%
American Indian	106	76.8%	32	**23.2%**	137	100.7%
Asian-Pacific Islander	417	70.1%	178	**29.9%**	603	98.7%
Black, Not Hispanic	379	74.5%	130	**25.5%**	512	99.4%
Hispanic	275	73.9%	97	**26.1%**	379	98.2%
White	4,615	85.7%	768	**14.3%**	5,727	94.0%
Male	3,511	71.9%	1,370	**28.1%**	5,158	94.6%
Female	3,585	77.4%	1,048	**22.6%**	4,853	95.5%

Total Numbers and Percentages of Special Population Students

Scoring Above and Below Proficiency

READING *	Advanced/Proficient		**Below/Not Proficient**	
	Count	Percentage	Count	**Percentage**
Low Income [1]	2,194	59.9%	1,471	**40.1%**
Limited English Proficient[2]	520	42.3%	710	**57.7%**
Migrant [3]	236	46.2%	275	**53.8%**
Disabled [4]	563	48.0%	609	**52.0%**
Gifted [5]	393	99% or more	3 or less	**1 % or less**

** Students may be classified in more than one special population category.*

1. *Low Income students served under Title I, Part A of the Elementary Secondary Education Act, Free and Reduced Lunch Program; or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, formerly AFDC).*
2. *Limited English Proficient are students whose first or dominant language is not English and who are served under the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.*
3. *Migrant students are transient students served under Title I, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.*
4. *Disabled students are those served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act.*
5. *Gifted students are academically talented students served under Chapter 52, Article 3 of the Alaska Administrative Code.*

Translating the Research Base on
Effective Reading Instruction to the Classroom

Although knowledge of effective, research-based reading practice is necessary to effect change, on its own it is insufficient (Simmons, Kame'enui, Good, Harn, Cole, & Braun, 2000). Schools must have reliable and replicable procedures for translating the research base on effective reading instruction into their individual classrooms. This challenge is substantial. Schools, as dynamic "host" environments consisting of people, pedagogies, principles, practices, and procedures that interact in complex ways, are faced with a significant challenge in making sure that the application of research-based reading programs and instructional methods are used with all K-3 students (Simmons, et al., 2000).

Sometimes the interactions in a school around beginning reading are aligned with the scientific knowledge base and the result is the implementation of effective, research-based classroom practices. Too often, however, these complex interactions do not result in school wide implementation of effective reading practices. Therefore, a major goal of reading improvement must be to increase the probability that scientifically based reading research practices find their way into Alaska schools, and that these reading practices are implemented at sufficiently high levels in all classrooms to effect significant improvement in children's reading performance. Achieving this goal requires that we identify, codify, implement and sustain the active ingredients derived from the scientific knowledge base of beginning reading.

In later sections of our Reading First application, we examine the intricacies of the schools as host environments, describe a prevention model of school wide reading improvement, and profile the components of our overall design.

In Section 1, our understanding of the scientifically based reading research, which includes three major dimensions of effective reading instruction in Grades K-3. The first dimension delineates five instructional components that serve as a foundation in beginning reading. The second dimension is the architecture or design of instruction for successful reading development. A substantial aspect of this instructional architecture is contained within the comprehensive reading program used in the classroom. The third dimension is a set of critical instructional principles and strategies used by classroom teachers to maximize the likelihood that all children will make satisfactory reading progress. Both the report from the National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read* (2000), and the report from the National Research Council*, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998), provides recommendations concerning these three dimensions.

Understanding of Scientifically Based Reading Research

A singular window of opportunity currently exists for educators concerned with prevention and intervention efforts in beginning reading. This opportunity is primarily the result of the confluence of two factors. The first factor is the consolidation of a substantial scientific knowledge base built on the sizable body of converging, multidisciplinary research evidence accumulated over the past forty years. This scientific knowledge base reflects a significant advancement in our understanding of both the nature of reading and the ways in which we as educators can work to ensure that children become successful readers. Primary sources of our knowledge base come from the following agencies and research syntheses:

1. National Institutes of Child, Health and Human Development (NICHD).
2. National Reading Panel Report (2000).
3. National Research Council, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow et al., 1998).
4. Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print (Adams, 1990).
5. Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (C IERA).
6. Center for the Study of Reading (University of Illinois, Champagne-Urbana).
7. National Reading Center (University of Georgia).

The second factor is an emerging coalition of support for research-based efforts directed at improving reading outcomes for all students, and especially students at risk of reading difficulty (e.g., Learning First Alliance, 1998). This broad coalition, spanning multiple segments of society, is arising in response to growing concerns about the pervasiveness and seriousness of reading failure among children in the United States.

To a large extent, therefore, our actions at this pivotal juncture will establish whether we stand at the threshold of an era marked by an increasingly literate populace or whether we are experiencing just another of the unremitting and incessant swings of the pendulum of reading trends and fads (Slavin, 1989). We face a difficult task. Drawing on our knowledge base, we are only now beginning to truly understand the considerable challenge associated with the task of teaching reading in an alphabetic writing system to an increasingly diverse population in constantly changing schools. Moats (1999) captured the intricacies inherent in this challenge by asserting, “teaching reading is rocket science.” What we know about preventing reading problems and intervening effectively requires that we are able to view the entire beginning reading system through both narrow and expansive lenses simultaneously as we attend to two complex systems that differ greatly in kind and scale.

The first complex system is our alphabetic writing system: the intricate, symbolic code devised to capture language by representing the sounds of speech with print (Adams, 1990; Perfetti & Zhang, 1996). The alphabetic writing system is the underlying framework that anchors beginning reading instruction. When children learn to read, they must be taught to read in an alphabetic writing system.

The second complex system is the school: the unwieldy amalgamation of policies, programs, professionals, and practices that interact in complicated ways. It is within this dynamic system that clear and focused reading programs must be effectively organized and implemented. In other words, the act of teaching reading does not take place in a vacuum but rather, in a unique and multifaceted "host environment" known as a school (Sugai, Kame'enui, Horner, Simmons & Coyne, in press).

To capitalize on the current auspicious alignment of forces and substantially improve reading outcomes for all students, we must focus on both the detailed principles of instructional design that acknowledge and address the nuances of our alphabetic writing system, and the broad scope of schoolwide implementation of comprehensive and effective reading practices. Effective schoolwide implementation is best addressed by a comprehensive professional development plan as outlined later in this proposal.

We have the knowledge base to effectively address the intricacies of the alphabetic writing system. The goals of teaching all children to read and drastically improving the prevention of serious reading difficulties, including reading disabilities, appear closer to reality than at any point in educational history. The rich and robust consensual evidentiary knowledge base provides us "a compass and sense of direction" (Walker et al., 1998) to address the enormous task of teaching all children to read successfully by the end of Grade 3. We have fundamental knowledge on when, what, and how to teach beginning reading for the majority of learners (National Reading Panel, 2000, Snow et al., 1998). In essence, we have a broad-spectrum set of practices that effect significant improvement in reading success when applied with fidelity and are part of a comprehensive reading program. For the general population of learners, we have solid scientific footing regarding the elements and features of effective reading programs.

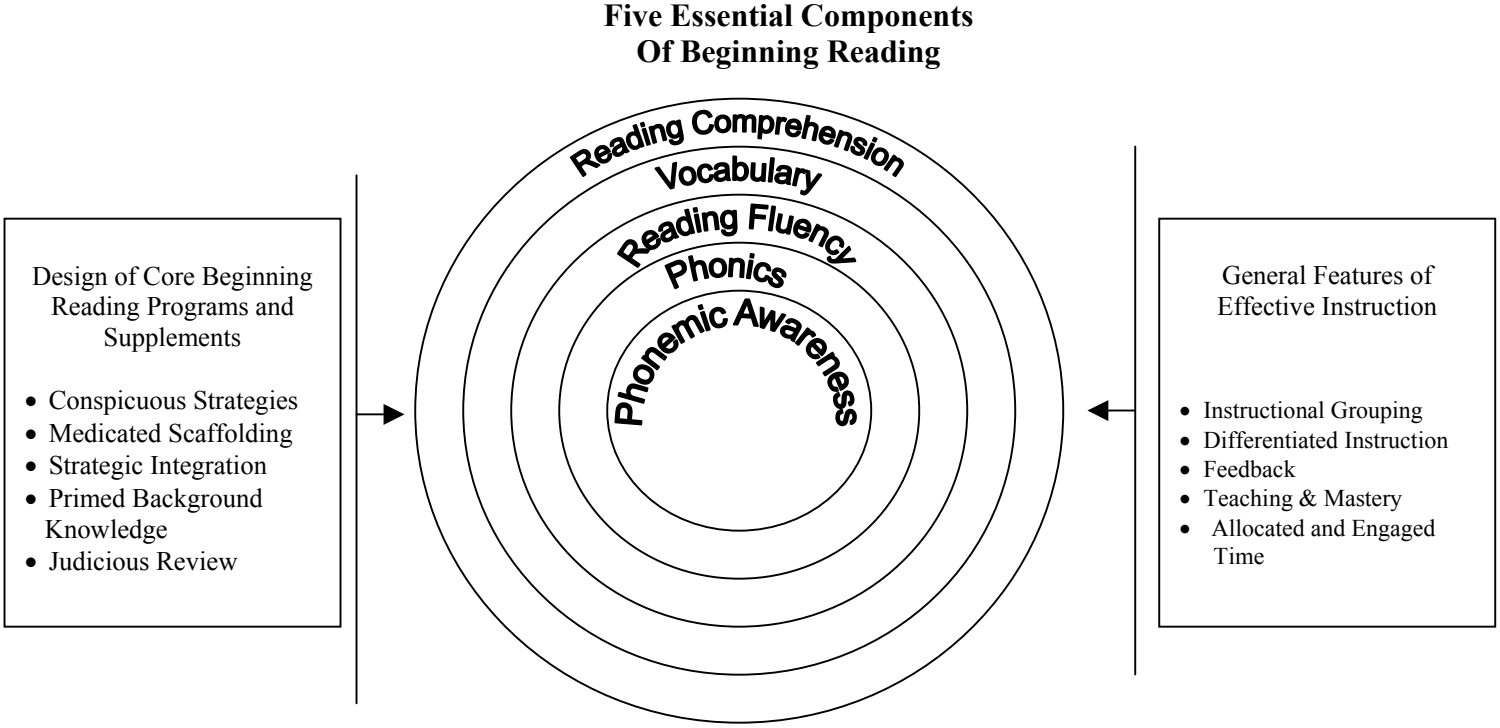
Reading First stipulates that five critical components of beginning reading be addressed in comprehensive programs that are aligned with the scientific knowledge base. In the following section, we summarize the research base for each of these components: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These components provide the content framework for scientifically based beginning reading instruction.

These five critical components are "big ideas" in beginning reading. Big ideas are the concepts and principles that facilitate the most efficient and broadest acquisition of knowledge across a range of examples in a domain (Carnine, 1994; Kame'enui, Carnine, Dixon, Simmons, & Coyne, 2002). Big ideas make it possible for students to learn the most, and learn it as efficiently as possible by serving as an anchor by which other "small" ideas can often be understood. How comprehensive reading programs select, prioritize, and connect information related to these big ideas is a major instructional design issue that will impact the scientific merit of a school's beginning reading program.

Principle assumptions that can be investigated in comprehensive beginning reading programs are that (a) not all curriculum objectives contribute equally to reading growth, and (b) more important information should be taught more thoroughly than less important information (Carnine , 1994). In other words, comprehensive-reading programs should focus extensively on the five critical beginning reading components and spend less emphasis on other areas.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the five essential components of beginning reading and the basic framework of the instructional programs and approaches that will be used in Reading First classrooms to increase the likelihood that students will make sufficient progress on the five essential components. One influence on the development of the skills represented by the five components is the comprehensive beginning reading programs and supplements that will be used in all Reading First classrooms in Alaska. Listed are five aspects of instructional design that characterize the construction quality of high-quality programs. A second influence in student reading achievement—what we refer to as the general features of effective instruction—is somewhat independent of specific programs subject areas. We include five features of instruction that characterize high-quality instructional delivery techniques for the range of students in general education classrooms. We now describe each of the major dimensions listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Relation Among Five Essential Components of Beginning Reading and Framework of Effective Instruction



Essential Instructional Components of Reading First

Phonemic awareness

The first critical component in beginning reading instruction is phonemic awareness (National Reading Panel, 2000). The broader construct called phonological awareness refers to the conscious understanding and knowledge that language is made up of sounds. In learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, the most important aspect of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness, which is the insight that words consist of separate sounds or phonemes, and the subsequent ability to manipulate these individual sound units (Adams, 1990). Adams and her colleagues succinctly summarized the importance of this understanding by stating that, "before children can make sense of the alphabetic principle, they must understand that the sounds that are paired with letters are one and the same as the sounds of speech" (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998, p. 19).

In a recent review of reading research, the role and relation of phonemic awareness to beginning reading acquisition garnered convincing and converging support (Smith, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998). Evidence derived from dozens of primary and secondary sources confirmed that children with strong phonemic awareness skills learn to read more easily than children with less developed skills (e.g.,Juel, 1988; Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1994). Moreover, the most distinguishing characteristic of children with learning disabilities in reading appears to be deficits in phonological processing (Wagner et al., 1997; Wolf & Bowers, 1999). Clearly, phonemic awareness skills must be developed for beginning reading instruction to be effective.

The development of phonemic awareness involves both specific conceptual understanding about language and a set of skills that grows with practice and application (Torgesen & Mathes, 2000). Research evidence documents that phonemic awareness skills can be taught to children at risk of reading difficulties. Intervention studies that have included instruction in phonemic awareness have consistently reported significant positive effects on both measures of phonologic skills and word reading skills for students with specific learning disabilities (Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998; Hatcher, Hulme, & Ellis, 1994; Lovett, Borden, Lacerenza, Benson, & Brackstone, 1994; O'Connor, Notari-Syverson, Vadasy, 1996; Torgesen et al., 1999).

Ideally, children will have acquired a substantial understanding of phonological awareness before they begin formal schooling. But because many children do not, phonological awareness instruction must begin as early as possible. This instruction is obligatory, not optional (Adams, 1990; Smith, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998). In phonological awareness instruction, students do not see any written words or letters, but rather listen and respond to what they hear. Torgesen, Wagner, and Rashotte's (1994) statistical analysis of students' performance on phonemic awareness tasks identified two critical clusters of skills: synthesis and analysis (i.e., blending and segmenting). Synthesis involves orally blending individual phonemes together to make a word (e.g., the sounds /mmmm/-/aaaa/-/t/ make the word mat). Analysis is the inverse task, orally segmenting a word into its individual phonemes (e.g., the sounds in the word fish are /ffff/-/iiii/-/shhhh/).

Blending and segmenting words at the phoneme level are the essential phonological skills that facilitate reading acquisition (National Reading Panel, 2000; O'Connor, Jenkins, & Slocum, 1995). Instruction should focus on these two fundamental skills and allocate less time to other phonological activities (e.g., rhyming, syllable clapping, phoneme deletion/substitution, etc.). Growth in phonemic awareness following attainment of beginning levels of understanding and

skill is driven primarily by instruction and practice in the use of phonemic decoding strategies in reading (Perfetti, Beck, Bell, & Hughes, 1987; Wagner, et al., 1997).

Phonics

The second component in beginning reading is phonics, or understanding the alphabetic code (Perfetti & Zhang, 1996; Snow et al., 1998). According to Perfetti (1985), "acquisition of the alphabetic code is a critical component—indeed, the definitive component—of reading in an alphabetic language" (p. 501). The alphabetic code, often referred to as alphabetic understanding, establishes a clear link between a letter and a sound and involves the "mapping of print to speech." It requires a reader to understand that the letters of our alphabet (i.e., graphemes) correspond to discrete sounds (i.e., phonemes). As Adams (1990) stated, "Very early in the course of instruction, one wants the students to understand that all twenty-six of those strange little symbols that comprise the alphabet are worth learning and discriminating one from the other because each stands for one of the sounds that occur in spoken words" (p. 245).

To read words, a reader must see a word and access its meaning in memory. But to get from the word to its meaning, beginning readers must first apply the alphabetic principle. The reader must: (a) sequentially translate the letters in the word into their phonological counterparts (the word sat is translated into the individual sounds or phonemes, /ssss/, /aaaa/, and /t/), (b) remember the correct sequence of sounds, (c) blend the sounds together (/ssssaaaat/ - /sat/), and (d) search her memory for a real word that matches the string of sounds (/sat/). More advanced readers must also use the alphabetic principle to recognize complex letter combinations and patterns (e.g., ea, -igh, silent-e patterns, r controlled vowels). Skillful readers do this so automatically and rapidly that it looks like the natural reading of whole words and not the sequential translation of letters and letter combinations into sounds and sounds into words.

Although the ultimate goal of reading is to construct meaning from print, one of the more compelling and reliable conclusions from research is that reading comprehension depends on strong word recognition skills (Chard, Simmons & Kame'enui, 1998; Lyon & Moats, 1997). Torgesen (2000) also emphasized the fundamental difficulty that students with learning disabilities have reading individual words: "Perhaps the most important single conclusion arising from the last 20 years of research on children who have specific difficulties learning to read is that these children experience a major bottleneck to reading growth in the area of skilled word identification" (p. 56). Further, reading interventions have clearly demonstrated that instruction in alphabetic understanding and a code-based approach to reading words show strong effects with students with learning disabilities and students at risk of reading difficulty (Brown & Felton, 1990; Foorman, et al., 1998; Hatcher, Hulme, & Ellis, 1994; Lovett et al., 1994; Torgesen et al., 1999; Vellutino, et al., 1996).

Children move through several stages in acquiring strategies to decode text effectively (Ehri, 1998). First, they first learn to apply partial phonemic analysis to unknown words, such as using the first letter to guide their guesses about new words. Second, if they are making normal progress, they begin to use more complete phonemic analysis on novel words, and the accuracy of their first attempts increases. Third, many children move into what can be described as a "consolidated alphabetic" phase, in which they decode words in "chunks" that correspond to combinations of letters which occur with high frequency in English. When the system breaks down and children do not develop efficient decoding skills fairly early during reading instruction, their exposure to text is limited because they struggle to read independently and consequently learn to avoid text. When they do read, they make too many word-level reading

errors to understand what they are reading and the cycle of frustration and avoidance is perpetuated (Stanovich, 1986). Both text avoidance and inaccurate reading make it very difficult for them to acquire fluent reading skills (Share & Stanovich, 1995).

Reading Fluency

The third component in beginning reading instruction is reading fluency, which is essentially automaticity with the phonological/alphabetic code, or the ability to translate fluently letters to sounds and sounds to words. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) described the fluent reader as one whose decoding processes are automatic, requiring no conscious attention. Meyer and Felton (1999) define reading fluency as the ability to read connected text "rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading, such as decoding"(p. 284). Others suggest definitions of reading fluency that go substantially beyond reading rate, to include grouping words into meaningful phrases as one reads (Aulls, 1978), prosodic reading (Allington, 1983), or reading with the kind of intonation and stress that maximizes comprehension (Rasinski, 1990).

Considerable and converging evidence indicates that many children with reading difficulties lack the ability to decode words automatically. Poor decoding fluency places considerable demand on a reader's ability to remember and process information because the reader is expending so much effort on word-by-word decoding. Unless readers become automatic with the alphabetic code, the time and attention required to identify a word and read it accurately limits the cognitive resources available to process the meaning of the sentence and larger text units in which the word appears (Stanovich,
1994).

Directly stated, if a reader has to spend too much time and energy figuring out what the words are, she will be unable to concentrate on what the words mean. Stanovich (1994) explained this relation by indicating that comprehension fails "not because of over reliance on decoding, but because decoding skill is not developed enough" (p. 283). Ehri (1998) suggests that automaticity is built up when children have accurately decoded a word several times during reading. If a child can recognize most of the words in a passage at a single glance, without having to stop and decode them, reading is much more fluent.

Fluent word recognition is one of several key factors needed for reading comprehension (Adams, 1990; Lyon, 1994; Fuchs et al., 2001). The close relationship between reading fluency (i.e., decoding words accurately and quickly) and reading comprehension (i.e., deriving meaning from print) has strong empirical and theoretical support (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001; Shinn, Good, Knutson, Tilly, & Collins, 1992). Thus, the third big idea underscores the importance of readers moving beyond the ability to just translate letters to sounds to the ability to use alphabetic understanding to decode words automatically with little or no conscious effort. It is only when students reach this degree of fluency that they are able to truly concentrate on the full meaning of what they read. Adams' (1991) summarizes this importance: "…the automaticity with which skillful readers recognize words is the key to the whole system…The reader's attention can be focused on the meaning and message of a text only to the extent that it's free from fussing with the words and letters." (p. 207).

In a recent meta analysis of research on instructional approaches to develop reading fluency, the National Reading Panel (2000) summarized findings on the effectiveness of guided oral reading and independent silent reading—two approaches commonly used to teach reading fluency. Based

on the 16 studies of guided oral reading that met the NRP research methodology criteria the Panel concluded that "...guided oral reading procedures that included guidance from teachers, peers, or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels" (p.12). The 14 studies of independent silent reading that met the research methodology criteria varied widely in methodological quality and reading outcomes measured, so they were examined individually to identify converging trends and findings in the data. The Panel was unable to find a positive relationship between silent reading and improvements in reading achievement, including fluency. The panel concluded that silent reading is not an effective practice when used as the only approach for developing fluency.

The number of instructional strategies that require students to read orally have led to improvements in automaticity and fluency. Teachers can have their students practice identifying letters and words from lists and engage in repeated readings of familiar texts with peer or teacher feedback. Repeated readings can include fixed-time activities in which students reread as much of a passage as they can in a set time or fixed-length activities in which they reread a set number of words and record their reading time (Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, 1998; Mastropieri, Leinart, & Scruggs, 1999).

At early reading stages, it is important that children read materials that facilitate successful identification and understanding of words, and avoid reading text in which the words are too difficult, unfamiliar, or indecipherable. Children should read stories, passages, texts, or materials with a high percentage of decodable words (i.e., words for which the student knows each letter-sound correspondence and can apply the appropriate blending or decoding skills) (Carnine, Silbert, & Kame'enui, 1997). Reading decodable texts demonstrates to the beginning reader the importance of accessing meaning through accurate word identification. For fluency building, children should read text in which they can accurately identify at least 95% of the words (Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, 1998).

In general, current research-based reading programs provide opportunities for children to apply and practice decoding skills through silent or partner reading, but typically do not specify procedures for teacher-guided oral reading as part of daily reading instruction.

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary development involves growth in knowledge of the meanings and pronunciations of words that are used in both oral and written language. The vocabularies that children use during listening, speaking, reading, and writing can differ, but vocabulary knowledge is essential for good reading skill because it underlies the ability to comprehend written material (Davis, 1942; Gough, 1996). The importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension is widely documented (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Anderson & Nagy, 1991; Baker, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998a).

Further, we know that the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension is largely reciprocal (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). That is, children must know most of the meanings of the words in the text they are reading if they are to understand what they are reading; and it is through reading that children have the opportunity to learn the meanings of new, unfamiliar words by reading and considering the way those words are used in text.

Though the National Reading Panel (2000) was not able to conduct a meta - analysis on vocabulary research (due largely to the range of research in this area), there are scientifically based conclusions that can be drawn regarding how to teach vocabulary. It is useful to keep in mind the National Reading Council's truism that "skilled readers are good comprehenders" (1998, p. 62) because it reminds us that the foundations of comprehension reside in knowledge of word meanings.

Although the National Research Council (Snow et al., 1998) underscored the importance of vocabulary development as a fundamental goal for students in the early grades, there is little evidence that schools effectively promote vocabulary development, especially in the primary grades (Biemiller, 2001a). The scientific research on vocabulary instruction reveals that (a) most vocabulary is learned indirectly, and that (b) some vocabulary must be taught directly (Baumann & Kame'enui, 1991). The following conclusions about indirect vocabulary learning and direct vocabulary instruction are of particular interest in the context of classroom instruction.

Indirect vocabulary instruction. Children learn the meanings of most words indirectly, through everyday experiences with oral and written language. Children learn word meanings indirectly in three ways:

1. Children engage daily in oral language (Hart & Risley, 1995). Young children learn word meanings through conversations with adults. As they engage in these conversations, children often hear adults repeat words several times. They also may hear adults use new and interesting words. The more oral language experiences children have, the more word meanings they learn.

2. Children listen to adults read to them. Story reading with children provides an approach for introducing and talking about new words (Elley, 1989; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Senechal, 1997). Reading aloud is particularly helpful when the adult reader pauses during reading to give the child a quick definition of a n unfamiliar word and after reading, engages the child in a conversation about the book. Reading stories to children and facilitating a discussion about vocabulary within the context of the story also provides children opportunities to learn new words before they have the reading skills necessary to acquire new vocabulary independently from their own reading (Biemiller, 2001a). Conversations about books also helps children learn new words and concepts and to relate them to their prior knowledge and experience.

3. Children read extensively on their own and learn many new words during independent reading. The more children read on their own, the more words they encounter and the more word meanings they learn.

Direct vocabulary instruction. Although a great deal of vocabulary is learned indirectly, some vocabulary should be taught directly (Biemiller, 2001a, Kame'enui, Dixon, & Carnine, 1987; Stahl & Shiel, 1999). A number of studies have shown that directly teaching vocabulary to children increases reading comprehension (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982; Dickinson, & Smith, 1994; McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Perfetti, 1983). In particular, it seems direct instruction is important to help students learn difficult words, such as those that represent complex concepts and are not part of the students' everyday experiences.
Direct instruction includes (a) providing students with specific word instruction, and (b) teaching students word-learning strategies.

Specific word instruction. Directly teaching individual words can provide students in-depth knowledge of word meanings, which can immediately help them understand what they are listening to or reading. It also can help them to use words accurately in speaking and writing. In particular:

1. Teaching specific words before reading helps both vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. Before they read a text, it is helpful to teach students specific words that are important for understanding the text.

2. Repeated exposure to vocabulary aids word learning. Students learn new words better when they encounter them often and in various contexts. The more children see, hear, and work with specific words, the better they learn them. Of course, when teachers provide extended instruction that promotes active engagement, they give students repeated exposure to new words.

Word-learning strategies. Of course, it is not possible for teachers to provide specific instruction for all the words their students do not know. Therefore, students need to develop effective word-learning strategies that include: (a) how to use dictionaries and other reference aids to learn word meanings and to deepen knowledge of word meanings; (b) how to use information about word parts to figure out the meanings of words in text; and (c) how to use context clues to determine word meanings (Baumann et al., 2002).

Reading Comprehension

The ability to read with comprehension involves strategies that readers use to enhance their understanding of text or repair their understanding of text if it breaks down while reading. The recent Rand report, *Reading for Understanding*, provides a lucid rationale for increasing our emphasis on teaching comprehension in K-3 (Snow, 2002). The authors note that the "successful development of beginning reading skills does not ensure that the child will automatically become a skilled reader" (p. 6). Children's ability to comprehend text is influenced by many of the same things that determine their ability to understand oral language (Gough, 1996). Knowledge of word meanings (vocabulary), knowledge of specific content, knowledge of grammar and syntax, and thinking and reasoning ability influence children's ability to understand both oral and written language. In fact, Perfetti (1985) defined reading as "thinking guided by print."

Comprehension strategies are only one of several factors that influence how well children understand what they read. Certainly, more attention also needs to be directed toward individual differences in children's oral language and vocabulary and the influence of these differences on comprehension development (Biemiller, 2001a; Hart & Risley, 1995). But it remains that a significant amount of information is available about the strategies that active, purposeful readers use to enhance their understanding of text (Pressley, 1998). The power of this knowledge is that it can be applied in the design of instructional interactions that stimulate the use of these strategies in children so that reading comprehension is increased (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman, 1996).

Instruction in specific comprehension strategies has also been shown to be an effective way to increase reading comprehension in children who have reading disabilities (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997). Although numerous research studies

have documented the improvements in reading comprehension that result from explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, there is still much to be learned about how teachers can learn to effectively promote the active and thoughtful use of comprehension strategies across different reading contexts (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Research over the past two decades has shown that instruction in comprehension can help students understand what they read, to remember what they read, and to communicate with others about what they read. Key findings from research on text comprehension instruction summarized by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), include the following conclusions that are of particular interest and value to classroom teachers. These findings concern what students should be taught about text comprehension, and how they should be taught it.

Text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use specific comprehension strategies. Strategies are conscious plans that readers use to make sense of text. Strategies can be thought of as procedures or sets of steps to follow that lead to text comprehension. The goal of strategy instruction is to help students become purposeful, active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension. Six strategies, in particular, appear to have a firm scientific basis for improving comprehension.

1. Monitoring comprehension. Students who are adept at monitoring their comprehension are aware of when they understand what they read. More importantly perhaps, they are aware of comprehension breakdowns, and if they know effective strategies are usually able to "fix up" comprehension problems that arise. Usually, the full development of this ability to monitor comprehension does not occur until late adolescence. But research is unequivocal that instruction in early grades helps students become better at monitoring their comprehension. Comprehension monitoring is an especially important instructional target for students with reading problems (Gersten et al., 2001).

2. Using graphic and semantic organizers. Graphic organizers are diagrams or other pictorial devices that are used to organize concepts and the interrelationships among concepts in text. Graphic organizers are referred to by a variety of names including maps, webs, graphs, charts, frames, or clusters (Baker, Gersten, & Grossen, 2002). Semantic organizers (also called semantic maps or semantic webs) are very common type of organizer, and look somewhat like a spider web. A central concept is connected by lines to a variety of related ideas and events.

3. Answering questions. Questions have long been used by teachers to guide and monitor students' learning (Baker et al., 2002). Research shows that questioning is a powerful strategy for improving students' learning from reading because they: (a) give students a purpose for reading, (b) focus students' attention on what is to be learned, (c) help students think actively as they read, (d) encourage students to monitor their comprehension, and (e) help students review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know.

4. Generating questions. Teaching students to ask their own questions improves their active processing of text and their comprehension. Generating questions helps students become aware of whether they know information contained in the text, and

thus provides a gauge for their own understanding. Readers can learn to ask themselves increasingly complex questions, which, for example, might require them to integrate information across segments of text. Readers can also learn to ask generic questions that can be applied to any assigned reading task. For example, readers can be taught to ask "main idea" questions that cover both narrative text and expository text.

5. Recognizing story structure. Story structure refers to the way the content and events of a story are organized into a plot. Readers who can recognize story structure have greater appreciation, understanding, and memory for stories (Gersten et al., 2001). In story structure instruction, students learn to identify the categories of content (setting, initiating events, internal reactions, goals, attempts, and outcomes) and how this content is organized into a coherent whole. Often students are taught to recognize story structure through the use of "story maps." Story maps, a type of graphic organizer, show the sequence of events in simple stories (Baker et al., 2002). Instruction in the content and organization of stories improves students' comprehension and memory of stories.

6. Summarizing. A summary is a synthesis of the important ideas in a text. Summarizing requires students to determine what is important in what they are reading, to condense this information, and to put it into their own words. Summarizing is an important reading and study strategy. It helps readers identify and connect the main ideas in the text they are reading, and it helps them remember what they have read. As students learn to summarize, they also learn to identify or generate better main ideas. Sometimes students will find main ideas expressed in a topic sentence. Other times, students will have to make a generalization, or infer the main idea. Students also learn to eliminate redundant and unnecessary information.

Comprehensive Instructional Programs: The Architecture of Instruction

An assumption about students in K-3 general education classrooms is that they have the cognitive skills to learn to read successfully. In beginning reading especially, the primary goal seems remarkably clear. The difficulty so many children have learning to read, however, indicates that the seemingly straightforward goal is an elusive one.

One of the problems is that historically the comprehensive reading programs that have been used by teachers to teach beginning reading have not been sufficiently sensitive to the instructional needs of many students at risk of reading failure. If we are to make a dramatic improvement in the development of successful beginning readers, we need to closely examine the "architectural characteristics" of beginning reading programs, which, if considered carefully and designed in the right way, have a high likelihood of increasing the chances that all students will learn to read successfully (Kame'enui & Simmons, 1999). In essence, comprehensive-reading programs must provide instruction on beginning reading so that "children can successfully obtain, rehearse, recall, apply, and transfer newly learned information to both routine and novel learning contexts" (Kame'enui & Simmons, 1999, p. 6). Although the technical nuances of instructional design are extremely complex, there are a few key principles that all educators concerned with teaching beginning reading should know.

A key design issue is "big ideas," a topic addressed earlier in describing the five essential components of beginning reading. Essential beginning reading components (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension) are big ideas. How comprehensive reading programs address these big ideas is a major instructional design issue. Other design issues are also essential to successful comprehensive beginning reading programs. The following principles of instructional design provide a blueprint of effective curriculum design that is essential to comprehensive beginning reading programs. These principles are taken from Kame'enui, Carnine, Dixon, Simmons, & Coyne (2002).

Conspicuous Strategies

Learning strategies are the general steps students follow to solve problems. Strategies should be taught explicitly to students, not left for them to deduce on their own. If not taught explicitly, some students will spend an inordinate amount of time before they identify the optimum strategy. In addition to learning being more efficient when strategies are taught explicitly, it is equally true that strategies are most effective when they generalize to a variety of learning tasks. Comprehensive beginning reading programs should make important strategies salient and include all of the steps teachers need to teach the strategy effectively to all students. If the comprehensive program does not provide the steps explicitly, either through teacher directions or printed examples, then the burden rests on the teacher to devise and communicate these strategies.

Initial instruction in the general education classroom is first line of prevention against reading failure (Snow et al., 1998). Perhaps the most significant change recommended for initial reading instruction is that it should be much more systematic and explicit than it is in many classrooms today. This focus is supported by a careful meta-analysis of the research literature on phonics instruction, for example, found in the report of the National Reading Panel (2000). The same recommendation for explicit, systematic instruction has been made in the teaching of phonemic awareness (Torgesen & Mathes, 2000), reading fluency (Meyer & Felton, 1999), vocabulary (Tomesen & Aarnoutse, 1998), and comprehension strategies (Duffy & Roehler, 1989).

When students are taught strategies explicitly, instruction leaves little to chance, thereby ensuring success for most children (Foorman et al., 1998; Torgesen, 1997; Vellutino, 1991). When instruction is explicit, the introduction of new information such as letter sounds is carefully sequenced and presented unambiguously. Each skill or piece of information builds on previously learned knowledge and is reviewed and practiced frequently to increase the likelihood that it will become a permanent part of the child's skill repertoire. By point of contrast, implicit instruction teaches strategies to children in the context of some larger learning activity, sometimes without attention to a sequence or plan, and important skills are not taught in isolation. For many children, learning specific strategies and skills this way remains confusing. For example, a teacher may point out a phonic element in the context of a word list or a book (e.g., "What is the same about each of these words? pat, pad, pin"). The child may conclude that what is similar is that each word has 3 letters, or that each word has a vowel in the middle. The most important objective, however, that all three words begin with the sound /p/, a concept that may remain hidden from the child or in competition with other concepts about similarities, such as the number of letters they contain or the nature of their middle sound.

Mediated Scaffolding
In a general sense scaffolding is the help or guidance given students as they learn new knowledge. The benefits of scaffolding are immediately apparent when children are learning new physical tasks. A great deal of guidance and support is provided to children as they first learn to throw or catch a ball, go down a slide, ride a bike. In cognitive tasks, one role of scaffolding is to eliminate as many problems as possible when learning something new. It is important that the scaffolds be temporary and removed as children acquire greater awareness and knowledge. Comprehensive reading programs should be structured so that learning tasks provide a great deal of support during initial acquisition and less support as students develop expertise. Scaffolding can be provided through multiple formats including the careful selection of examples that progress from less to more difficult, the purposeful separation of highly similar and potentially confusing examples, facts, and concepts, and the strategic sequencing of tasks that require learners to recognize then produce a response.

Strategic Integration
Strategic integration involves the careful combination of new information with what the learner already knows to produce a more generalizable, higher-order skill. In beginning reading, one obvious example is moving from identifying the sounds of individual letters and letter combinations to the reading of whole words. The successful integration of new information with existing knowledge increases the likelihood that new information will be understood more easily and at a deeper level. In comprehensive reading programs, the integration must be strategic so that new information does not become confused with what the learner already knows (for example, asking a learner to read words that contain letter sounds that have not been taught).

Primed Background Knowledge
Unlike other instructional design principles, background knowledge is rather straightforward and refers to the related knowledge students must know in order to learn a new concept or strategy. In reading comprehension, for example, a student who knows about or has experience with carnivals would likely have an easier time understanding a story about carnivals than a student who does not have that knowledge or experience. Particularly with big ideas, the means by which instructional tools accommodate background knowledge can be crucial to learning. Brief and informal assessments, for example, can yield useful information on the extent to which students have the background knowledge the comprehensive or supplemental program assumes they have.
Comprehensive reading programs in beginning reading should capitalize on the importance of background knowledge in the materials they select and in the guidelines they give teachers for priming or teaching students the background knowledge they need to understand the learning task. For students who lack the necessary background knowledge, an effective comprehensive program would not only provide instruction on that knowledge, but would also sequence instruction where it is likely to do the most good: neither too close to new instruction nor so far back that students will lose their facility with it before it is needed.

Judicious Review
That adage that practice makes perfect is not a reliable standard for successful learning (Dempster, 1991). Kame'enui and his colleagues (2002) identified four critical dimensions of review that have important applications for beginning reading instruction. Judicious review should be (a) sufficient to enable the student to perform the task without hesitation; (b) distributed over time; (c) cumulative, with information integrated into increasingly complex tasks; (d) varied to illustrate the wide application of a student's understanding of the information.

This review framework is especially critical for students who are most at risk of reading difficulty because their knowledge is typically more unstable than the knowledge of more successful learners. Comprehensive reading programs should clearly identify review material, clearly specify how students are to respond, and what should be done when students have difficulty retaining what they have been taught.

General Features of Effective Instruction

In general, the newest generation of reading programs provides a much stronger emphasis on teaching the five essential components of beginning reading than their predecessors. However, even the best of programs provide only limited guidance to teachers on general strategies they should use to effectively teach the contents of the comprehensive program. The intent of general (but frequently vague) instructional guidelines is to encourage the unique contribution of teachers, but the result can be extensive variability in the quality and quantity of reading instruction that children receive, even when the same, high-quality research-based program is being used. The choices teachers have to make daily in prioritizing the vast menu of activities included in typical basal reading programs can be overwhelming for many teachers. The added challenge of providing instruction that meets the needs of all children in the classroom makes their decision-making that much more complex and that much more critical. Even an experienced teacher, when faced with using a multi-optioned reading basal for the first time, may not have enough domain-specific knowledge to select instructional and assessment activities that will ensure that all students make adequate progress (Lyon and Moats, 1988).

Variation in Instructional Approaches

Teacher delivery, or implementation of a prescribed curriculum, is an essential consideration that directly influences student achievement (Baker & Zigmond, 1990). This section provides a theoretical and empirical base for six instructional practices that research suggests have a major influence on students' reading achievement: (a) explicit instruction, (b) homogeneous grouping, (c) corrective feedback, (d) teaching to mastery, (e) guided oral reading, and (f) time spent teaching each instructional component. These do not represent an exhaustive list of practices that teachers should be using on a daily basis, but they are an important list of practices that should not be compromised. Other practices can certainly be added—effective teachers do many more things regularly during instruction that are not on this list—but these six strategies form a manageable number of strategies that teachers can develop expertise on in context of high-quality professional development.

Grouping for Instruction

Teachers provide instruction to the whole class (i.e., heterogeneous grouping) or to smaller groups of students who have a similar level of knowledge or skill (i.e., homogeneous grouping). Although both types of grouping have appropriate applications, research on effective teaching suggests that children who are learning a new skill benefit from instruction that is precisely aimed at their knowledge level (Carnine, Silbert, & Kame'enui, 1990). Consequently, grouping students of similar skill levels enables the teacher to present material appropriate to the instructional level of a number of students at the same time. This increases the likelihood that students will respond correctly to learning tasks and stay actively engaged. Responding correctly and staying actively engaged are factors that increase student achievement (Englert, 1983; Rosenshine, 1986). Moreover, the practice provided by frequent opportunities to respond will

improve the skill fluency or automaticity that students need to effectively apply knowledge in new learning situations (Daly, Lentz, & Boyer, 1996).

Small group instruction is also an excellent intervention component for students who are struggling. The child's general classroom teacher can normally provide small group instruction effectively. In fact, many experts believe that part of every instructional day during beginning reading instruction should be structured to allow the classroom teacher to work with small groups of children that are flexibly organized according to the children's specific instructional needs (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). The benefit of small group instruction is related to instructional intensity, and meta - analyses consistently show positive effects of grouping practices that increase intensity (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 1999). An important finding in terms of classroom feasibility and impact is that these analyses have shown that more expensive one-toone interventions are not more effective than small-group interventions (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Other methods for increasing instructional intensity include (a) peer tutoring and partner reading activities (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Simmons, 1997; Mathes, Torgesen, & Allor, 2001), (b) use of trained paraprofessionals to deliver scripted interventions (Torgesen, Mathes, Wagner, Rashotte, Menchetti, & Grek, 2002), and (c) use of computer technology to provide additional practice opportunities (Kamil & Lane, 1998).

Differentiated Instruction

The objective that all students will become successful readers by the end of Grade 3 requires that goals for reading success be defined in kindergarten through third grade, and that the necessary levels of instruction intensity be provided students so they can reach these goals. Differentiated instruction means that students will require different instructional opportunities to reach these goals. Instruction will need to vary on one or more features, including intensity, amount, or formats, in order for all students to become successful readers.

Reading First schools will be provided with very specific guidelines for how to identify students who are likely to become successful readers by the end of Grade 3 when the comprehensive reading program provided in the general educational classroom is implemented with fidelity. The guidelines will also identify students who are not likely to become successful readers without instruction that is noticeably different than strong instruction from the comprehensive reading program. For students who require differentiated instruction to make satisfactory progress, schools will be provided with clear guidelines for using research-based options. These instructional interventions, as we refer to them, will be developed and implemented on the basis of student need.

For students who require intervention, but whose reading difficulties are not particularly serious, strategic interventions will be implemented. Typically, these interventions will entail the use of supplemental instruction materials that provide a more intense focus on the five essential components of beginning reading. Different instructional formats, such as more small group instruction, may also be needed. For students with serious reading difficulties, intensive interventions will be the means for providing differentiated instruction. Intensive interventions will require constructing instructional programs designed individually for students. The level of intensity of these individually designed programs will depend on the magnitude and nature of the reading problem.

For all students receiving a strategic or intensive intervention, differentiated instructional formats will be built to support the comprehensive reading program that is being used with all students. Progress in essential components will be monitored and frequent student assessments will be linked to intervention effectiveness and the performance of students who are on track for successful reading outcomes.

Feedback to Students

Feedback provides critical information to students about their learning. It lets them know when they are successful and why, which can be reinforcing, especially when they are tackling challenging tasks. Corrective feedback directs the student's attention to important aspects of an incorrect response. For example, in beginning reading instruction the teacher provides direct corrective feedback by giving the student the correct sound or word then having the student repeat the correct response. This can be followed by practice with flash cards, re-reading text, or reviewing error words on flash cards. In less direct corrective feedback the teacher points to letters or word parts guiding the student to sound out the mistaken word, or giving the student clues such as "Try another way" or "What sound does ____ make?" until the students self-corrects the error. Critics of corrective feedback contend that providing beginning readers with feedback on their errors might interfere with their comprehension or make them dependent on an external monitoring source rather than relying on their own sense of what has been read.

Most of the research on corrective feedback has focused on comparisons of feedback techniques and the effects on word recognition in beginning readers (e.g., Meyer, 1982; Pany & McCoy, 1988; Barbetta, Heward, Bradley, & Miller, 1994). Findings from these studies suggest that the use of direct corrective feedback enhances word recognition accuracy, and in some cases reading comprehension. One study of pre-readers, which experimentally evaluated the effects of corrective feedback on phoneme segmentation, showed significant improvements in phoneme segmentation when feedback was provided (Content, Kolinsky, Morais, & Bertelson, 1986). Research focused on the efficacy of feedback versus no feedback corroborates these findings.

An analysis of these studies conducted by McCoy and Pany (1986), found that corrective feedback was associated with more accurate word recognition and did not appear to interfere with comprehension during reading. Findings from both types of research also indicate that young children require more corrective feedback than those at a more advanced level of learning because they have not mastered the skills needed to automatically self-correct (Gardner, 1998).

The research on corrective feedback has focused primarily on students with learning disabilities. For average readers the interpretation is not as clear. However, the evidence to date suggests that corrective feedback can prevent children from mis-learning and mis-applying new skills and gives them a standard for their performance on academic tasks.

Understandably, the role of the teacher in error correction is very crucial. Schwartz (1997) concluded that when teachers actively model correct responses and give students immediate feedback they are more likely to practice independently using the correct information than when the teacher simply guides the student to find and correct their own error.

Teaching to Mastery

Teaching to mastery means that students have a firm grasp of previously taught skills and knowledge before they are introduced to new material. Numerous studies have shown positive effects for mastery learning on academic performance as measured by criterion-referenced tests

(e.g., Guskey & Pigott, 1988; Kulik, Kulik & Bangert-Downs, 1990). Research also indicates that children who do not master content before learning new skills are less likely to retain what they have learned or to apply it fluently (Daly, Lenz & Boyer, 1996; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). This is especially true for lower performing students (Heward & Orlansky, 1992). In beginning reading, for example, once a sound-letter correspondence is taught, the reader will be expected to apply that knowledge in increasingly complex ways. Students who fail to learn a foundational skill not only have to catch up by learning the skill, they must also keep pace with the daily introduction of new content.

Most current reading programs are not designed to promote mastery learning. They control the amount of new material students are expected to learn in any given lesson, which implies an expectation of mastery learning, but the instructional guidelines call for teachers to continue to move through the lessons whether or not all students have completely learned the material, and provide remediation or additional practice at another time to students who are struggling.

Teaching to mastery is dependent upon the teacher monitoring students' performance during and after instruction to see if they have retained new skills beyond the immediate lesson. Monitoring how well students understand new content and skills requires that teachers frequently and systematically collect data on students' performance during instruction. However, unless teachers are required to frequently and systematically collect data on students' performance they are more likely to rely upon informal and unsystematic observations, thereby increasing the likelihood that students who are struggling will go unnoticed and not receive the extra help they need.

Monitoring the progress of students on previously taught material at frequent intervals is another important feature of mastery learning because it is a reliable way to determine if students have retained newly learned material in memory or their skill repertoire beyond the immediate lesson. Progress monitoring helps teachers plan instruction and has been shown to have positive effects on student achievement. For example, Jones and Krouse (1988) found that students of teachers who gathered data on oral reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills made significantly greater achievement gains in reading than did control students for whom no data were collected.

Allocated and Engaged Time

Lyon and Moats, (1997) observed that an important dimension of beginning reading instruction is the extent to which all components of a complete, balanced approach are included in each lesson. This observation is supported by the growing body of research on beginning reading (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow et al., 1998). In the face of using a standard curriculum where the goal is to cover as much pre-established subject matter as possible, observational studies have found that there is a tendency among teachers to assign equal importance to everything (Durkin, 1990).

In the average 60 to 90 minutes typically allotted to daily reading instruction this means that the typical teacher of beginning reading will likely devote equal time to teaching all the skills included in the scope and sequence for the lesson. This could mean, for example, that one component of recommended instruction such as writing skills might be given equal instructional time with decoding skills in a beginning reading lesson even though in the beginning stages of reading instruction decoding skills are more critical for word recognition than writing.

Reading First classrooms will focus predominantly on the five essential elements, and a minimum of 90 uninterrupted, protected minutes per day will be allocated to beginning reading instruction. Time devoted to beginning reading instruction will be considerably more than is now common in K-3 classrooms in Alaska. Keeping students actively engaged for that length of time will be a challenge for many teachers. Many teachers will have to learn ways to vary instruction to keep student engagement high during the entire reading lesson. Variation in the way information is presented, in the instructional formats they use, and in the ways students can participate during the lesson will also increase engagement and active learning.

Summary of Beginning Reading Research

In beginning reading there is a large body of scientific evidence to draw on to inform practice. Recently, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that the weight of research evidence in beginning reading is sizeable enough that there exists sufficient empirical basis for reaching broad consensus within the field (Snow et al., 1998). As a result, the National Reading Panel (2000) was formed and applied an objective review methodology to "undertake comprehensive, formal, evidence-based analyses of the experimental and quasi-experimental research literature" (p. 1). We are committed to supporting prevention and intervention efforts that make use of this extensive knowledge base and that also reflect the full complexities inherent in beginning reading instruction. We must attend to both the "small" and the "large" elements of our complex alphabetic writing system and our equally complex schools. A window of opportunity exists. If we can sustain this dual focus in beginning reading, with all eyes on us, we may be able to bring about a lasting difference in the lives of—not some, or most—but all children (Kame'enui, 1998). This evidence will be the scientific foundation of the Alaska Reading First proposal and the professional development activities described in this application.

Alaska Plan to Connect the Science of Reading to Schools and Classrooms

The overarching objective of the Reading First program in Alaska is to ensure that all Reading First classrooms in K-3 use high quality instructional program and methods to teach beginning reading to all students including English language learners and special education students. Essential components in beginning reading are phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Comprehensive reading programs will be selected that focus on these big ideas, provide clear instruction in the strategies students need to learn, and maximize student success throughout the process of learning to read. Critical instruction methods and strategies for teaching this content include explicit teacher instruction and immediate feedback, using a combination of whole class and small group instructional methods, and making sure students master essential reading goals.

Meeting this objective requires a comprehensive, multidimensional plan, with all participant structures and organizations in agreement that the primary goal is to provide high quality reading instruction to all students in Reading First classrooms. Fundamental to the plan is the establishment of common features that will characterize teaching and learning in Reading First classrooms. These common features will be in alignment with the scientific knowledge basis in beginning reading. All Alaska Reading First classrooms will have seven common features.

1. Instruction in Alaska Reading First classrooms will emphasize the development of skills and knowledge in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Other areas will be also be emphasized but these five components will be paramount.

2. A comprehensive reading program constructed according to the architectural principles of the scientific basis of beginning reading will be used in each Reading First classroom. The comprehensive reading program will be selected according to sound principles of instructional design, which if implemented with fidelity, will meet the reading instructional needs of approximately 75-80 percent of students in K-3 general education classrooms.

3. Supplemental reading materials will guide strategic interventions that will be used with approximately 20-25 percent of the students who do not make adequate reading progress in Reading First classrooms, but whose reading difficulties are considered moderate, rather than severe. These reading materials will be culturally sensitive and will integrate students' knowledge and life experiences.

4. Intensive interventions will be individually developed for the approximately 5 10 percent of students who are having severe reading difficulties.

5. Strategic and intensive interventions will be designed to complement the comprehensive reading program, not supplant it. The progress of intervention students will be monitored more frequently than the progress of other students so that programs can be adjusted in a timely manner to increase the intensity of the interventions, when needed.

6. To deliver instruction effectively and efficiently to all students, teachers will rely on research-based instructional practices and strategies (e.g., explicit instruction, immediate feedback, differentiated instruction). These strategies will be used during teaching of the comprehensive program as well as during intervention instruction.

7. The reading progress of all students in Reading First classrooms will be monitored systematically a minimum of three times per year. Progress monitoring data will be used to determine the need for strategic and intensive interventions, to establish challenging goals for individual students, and to determine the program effectiveness.

Responding effectively to students at-risk of reading failure will be a key feature of Reading First LEAs, schools, and classrooms in Alaska. Classroom teachers, through professional development and ongoing support systems, will develop the skills and knowledge necessary to identify students who are not making sufficient progress as early as possible so that the likelihood of providing a more effective reading program can be increased substantially. This responsiveness on the part of teachers and their collaborators (e.g., mentor coaches) requires a skillful blending of data utilization and professional judgment.

In terms of data utilization, Reading First classrooms will systematically monitor the reading progress of all children at least three times per year. The progress monitoring system called Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) will be one of the central features

of the Technology and Dissemination component of Alaska Reading First. DIBELS, the progress monitoring system that will be used in all Reading First schools, is a web-based data entry and analysis system that instantaneously generates reports (i.e., within 32 seconds) of progress and performance after data entry. DIBELS can be used to determine the degree to which students are making adequate progress in phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency. Oral reading fluency, as a measure of reading fluency also provides a very strong indicator of reading comprehension (especially through Grade 3). The DIBELS system also includes data decision rules that identify which students are at-risk of reading failure and should be provided with instructional interventions to improve reading progress.

The role of teacher judgment is also critical, however, in making decisions about interventions. The importance of providing necessary context to understand how interventions should be shaped and delivered requires the active input of expert, perceptive teachers. For example, at-risk students who are absent 50 percent of the time may have very different instructional needs than at-risk students who virtually never miss a day of school. Moreover, an intervention for a student whose teacher notices that response to instruction is much better during small group instruction than whole-class instruction might organize an intervention around increasing substantially the amount of small group instruction. The point is that teacher judgment about student learning and performance is critical in establishing interventions that address the needs of students in specific settings.

The majority of children who enter school at risk for reading difficulties can be thought of as falling into two broad groups. Many children enter school with adequate general verbal ability but have cognitive weaknesses in the area of phonological processing. Their primary problem learning to read involves relations between print and oral language. Problems are manifested in their difficulty learning to read printed words accurately and fluently. Another group of students, including many minority students and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds enter school significantly behind their middle-class peers in a much broader range of pre-reading skills (Hecht, Burgess, Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 2000; Hart & Risley, 1995). These children have weaknesses in broad oral language skills that support reading comprehension. They also have weaknesses in the phonological skills required to become fluent readers. Although it is theoretically possible for a child to enter school weak in vocabulary and conceptual knowledge, but strong in phonological skills, this pattern is extremely rare. This is because the same environmental conditions prior to school entry that are associated with weak vocabulary knowledge also have a negative impact on the development of phonological and print-related skills.

Common across the two predominant groups of children who enter school at increased risk of reading failure are difficulties with phonological awareness and subsequent print-related skills. Thus, early reading interventions for at-risk students almost invariably should include a strong component targeting phonological awareness and associated print related skills (i.e., phonics). Children who also have vocabulary and general language difficulties also need more intense instructional interventions that focus on these areas.

Extreme variability among children in their preparation for learning to read requires that reading instruction be sensitive to individual differences. Some children enter school on the verge of reading and require very little explicit instruction from their teachers to become successful readers. These children still profit from explicit and systematic instruction but they require less of it than many of their peers (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). To become a proficient reader, some

children require more extensive instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency development, but less intense instruction in vocabulary and comprehension. Other children will require not only special support in phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, but also specialized interventions focusing on vocabulary and comprehension.

It is important to emphasize that the vast majority of appropriate interventions for students experiencing reading difficulties should not involve dramatic changes in reading programs or instructional procedures. Rather, strategic and intensive intervention students will benefit from more explicit and more intense instruction in the major beginning reading components. For example, research suggests that efficient decoding skills are a necessary (but insufficient) condition for growth in reading fluency (Adams, 1990; Share & Stanovich, 1995; Ehri, 1998). Thus, if teachers switch to a sight word instructional approach because a child is having difficulties learning to decode, they are actually decreasing the chances that the child will successfully acquire the analytic reading skills necessary to read the many thousands of words that are required to read fluently in middle school and high school (Ehri, 1998).

Alaska's Unique and Special Student Populations

A fundamental feature of Alaska's Reading First schools will be their ability to respond to students individually when they are not making adequate reading progress. In addition to monitoring the progress of individual students, special populations of students will be targeted for instructional approaches that have been shaped to meet their unique instructional needs. Two populations, in particular, will receive general classroom instruction designed to meet their unique needs: students with disabilities, and English-language learners. The instruction provided these student populations will focus on the same essential instructional elements, and rely on the same assessments, as is provided to their general education peers.

Differentiated instruction will be used with these students to assist them in reaching the same challenging reading goals as other students, and this instruction will be in place before these students experience difficulty learning in the context of typical general instruction settings. For example, we know that students with disabilities— regardless of the specific disability—require more explicit instruction and more review than their general education classroom peers (Gersten, Baker, Pugach, Scanlon, & Chard, 2001). We also know that English-language learners require more extensive vocabulary instruction and opportunities to express verbally what they are learning than their general education classroom peers (Gersten & Baker, 2000; August & Hakuta, 1998). These unique needs influence the instructional approaches and structures that will be used to teach these students. For example, students with disabilities and English-language learners require more opportunities to work in small groups than their general classroom peers because instruction in small groups can be more focused and directed toward the needs of individual students, and the opportunities for students to produce responses in a teacher supported environment are greatly increased (Gersten & Baker 2000; Elbaum et al., 1999). Although the reasons for the benefits of small group instruction may differ for English-language learners and students with disabilities, in terms of service delivery models, it is fortunate that how these small groups are set up and run may appear quite similar. In other words, once general education teachers, and their specialist colleagues know how to teach effectively in small group formats, the format can be used effectively with students with disabilities, English-language learners, and general education students who may require strategic or intensive interventions to increase reading progress.

Students with Disabilities

Research evidence suggests that reading interventions for students with disabilities should focus on the same knowledge and skills that are part of reading instruction for all children (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Important differences are that instruction should be more intense, more explicit and systematic, and fundamentally more supportive than reading instruction provided to students without disabilities (Torgesen, 2001).

Kame'enui and his colleagues (Kame'enui et al., 2002) have organized features of intensive instruction into a guiding framework of instruction for students with learning difficulties, including students with disabilities. They suggest that instruction should (a) make learning strategies more overt, (b) provide more learning scaffolds for new concepts, knowledge and skill, (c) pay careful attention to knowledge integration, (d) purposefully activate students' background knowledge, and (e) provide judicious review of previously learned material.

Some of the major advances in instructional research over the past two decades have been in the area of instructional methods for students with disabilities (Gersten, Baker, Pugach, Scallon, & Chard, 2001). Many of the key components of these effective teaching methods have relied on principles of instructional design identified by Kame'enui et al. (2002) as anchors for their interventions. For example, research on the use of scaffolds and procedural facilitators has resulted in extensive evidence of how knowledge of text structure can be used to help students become better readers (Englert et al., 1991; Idol, 1987; Idol & Croll, 1987; Gurney, Gersten, Dimino & Carnine, 1990). As a way of making learning expectations more explicit, research on direct instruction has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of this instructional principle in a variety of disciplines for students with learning disabilities (Carnine, Steely, & Silbert, 1996; O'Connor, Notari-Syverson, & Vadasy, 1996; Swanson & Hoskyn, 1998; White, 1988).

Reading First requires that all K-3 general education teachers and K-3 special education teachers be trained in scientifically based reading research to provide the context necessary to coordinate services and thereby strengthen the intensity of services provided by K-3 general education teachers and K-3 special education teachers to students already identified for special education. In addition, Reading First provides professional development for all K-12 special education teachers in the district of an awarded school to assure that all special education teachers working with older students on Individual Education Programs (IEPs) who have not yet learned to read or to read fluently, receive professional development on scientifically based reading research practices. Under Reading First, teachers will use principles of scientifically based reading research when developing IEPs for students with reading disabilities and Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) for very young students. General and special education teachers will ensure that the interventions in Reading First activities are appropriate to individual students according to the goals and objectives in the IEPs and IFSPs.

English-Language Learners

Primary grade Alaskan children speak ninety-one different languages, with Yup'ik Eskimo being the most frequently cited. It is followed by Spanish, Filipino, Inupiaq Eskimo and then by Korean and Russian. In Alaska, teachers must take special care to address the linguistic and cultural needs of the children with whom they interact, due to the proliferation of cultures and languages, both indigenous and immigrant, in this state. While this is a growing reality across America, it is especially sensitive in Alaska where many people live in isolation, outside of a road system, and are not in regular contact with mainstream culture, save for television. At the

state level concentrated efforts will be made to address the special linguistic needs of participating districts and schools, including providing information in languages other than English for those parents and families with limited English proficiency. The National Research Council in its 1998 report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children,* recognizes the importance of supporting the child's first language while the child is becoming English proficient:

> Hurrying young non-English-speaking children into reading in English without ensuring adequate preparation is counter productive. Learning to speak English first contributes to children's eventual fluency in English reading, because it provides a foundation to support subsequent learning about the alphabetic principle through an understanding of the sublexical structure of spoken English words and of the language and content of the material they are reading. The abilities to hear and reflect on the sublexical structure of spoken English words, as required for learning how the alphabetic principle works, depends on oral familiarity with the words being read. Similarly, learning to read for meaning depends on understanding the language and referents of the text to be read. Moreover, because being able to read and write in two languages confers numerous intellectual, cultural, economic, and social benefits, bilingualism and biliteracy should be supported whenever possible. To the extent possible, non-English-speaking children should have opportunities to develop literacy skills in their home language as well as in English.
>
> If language-minority children arrive at school with no proficiency in English but speaking a language for which there are instructional guides, learning materials, and locally available proficient teachers, these children should be taught how to read in their native language while acquiring oral proficiency in English and subsequently taught to extend their skills to reading in English.
>
> If language-minority children arrive at school with no proficiency in English but speak a language for which the above conditions cannot be met and for which there are insufficient numbers of children to justify the development of the local capacity to meet such conditions, the initial instructional priority should be developing the children's oral proficiency in English. Although print materials may be used to support the development of English phonology, vocabulary, and syntax, the postponement of formal reading instruction is appropriate until an adequate level of oral proficiency in English has been achieved (*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, National Research Council, pp. 324-335).

The number of children from linguistically diverse backgrounds who are enrolled in Alaska schools is increasing rapidly. Like other students, a critical educational goal for English-language is successfully learning to read in English. The added challenge for these students is considerable, however, because they are faced with the double demands of learning a new language and learning academic content simultaneously. Thus, specific strategies that address the challenge faced by English-language learners in Grades K-3 will be a primary concern of Reading First schools.

It is useful to begin by recognizing that instructional interventions that seem to be effective with English-language learners are aligned with principles of effective instruction for native English speakers (Gersten, Baker & Marks, 1999). Principles of effective reading instruction for native

English speakers are directly relevant for teaching reading to English-language learners, although important modulation and adjustments are required (Gersten & Baker, 2000; Gersten & Jiménez, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1995). Modulation, for example, would require much greater linkage of vocabulary instruction with word attack and analysis instruction for English-language learners than for native English speakers. Additional attention should also be paid to teaching phonemes and sounds that are prevalent in English but do not exist in a student's native language. English-language learners would likely require many more opportunities to practice speaking and reading aloud, and more time on vocabulary development, including the teaching of meanings of words that will be quite familiar to virtually all native English speakers but perhaps not familiar to many English-language learners. Also, the knowledge these students have in their native language can be used to help them learn literacy skills in English (Au, 1993; August & Hakuta, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 1983; Kellerman & Sharwood Smith, 1986).

Vocabulary instruction can play a central role in beginning reading programs for English-language learners (Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1999). Consensus among teachers of English-language learners is that the number of new vocabulary terms introduced at any one time should be limited (Gersten & Baker, 2000). One useful guide is to present no more than approximately 7 words that students would work on and study over relatively long periods of time. Criteria for selecting words should be carefully considered, so that words are selected that convey key concepts, are of high utility, and are relevant to the bulk of the content being learned.

Restricting the number of words English-language learners are expected to learn will help them learn word meanings at a deep level of understanding, an important principle of sustained vocabulary growth (Baker, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998a, 1998b; Baumann & Kame'enui, 1991; Beck & McKeown, 1985; Nagy 1988). Basal reading programs typically do not provide the type of guidance necessary in selecting vocabulary words for instruction for English-language learners (Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1998). Consequently, a strong focus in Reading First classrooms with English language learners will be on procedures for teachers to work with each other and their mentor coaches to target essential vocabulary words for instruction.

A handful of studies have addressed the efficacy of specific vocabulary instructional methods for English-language learners. Vocabulary instruction was the explicit focus of a study by Rousseau et al. (1993). An experimental method was used to teach word meanings to students, which included visually presenting the words, defining the words, and using gestures and other visual techniques (e.g., pictures). On two important outcome measures—accurate reading of all the words in the story and comprehension of the story—students who received this method did substantially better than students in the comparison condition, in which teachers previewed the entire story with students by reading it to them.

Saunders et al. (1998) also found that a range of direct instructional approaches to build a deep understanding of vocabulary words prior to story reading were successful with English-language learners. Some of these methods include (a) providing multiple exposures to vocabulary words, (b) introducing new words before they are encountered in the story, (c) providing extended practice opportunities with new words, (e) focusing on idioms, and (f) developing words banks. Saunders et al. also found that it was important to link critical vocabulary to relevant experiences in students' lives.

One of the important points in these vocabulary intervention studies is that the methods would likely be beneficial with all students, not just English-language learners. Certainly, it may be necessary to place a stronger emphasis on vocabulary instruction for English-language learners

than native English speakers, but many of the same instructional techniques will be useful for both groups of students.

A general rule of thumb is that the time-tested practice of introducing new vocabulary prior to reading a new story should be part of reading instruction for all students, and it is especially critical for English-language learners. Echevarria (1998) described how this type of vocabulary instruction might be organized with English language learners: "One form of vocabulary development includes short, explicit segments of a class time in which the teacher directly teaches key vocabulary. These five minute segments would consist of the teacher saying the vocabulary word, writing it on the board, asking students to say it and write it and defining the term with pictures, demonstrations, and examples familiar to students" (p. 220).

Both the Rousseau et al. (1993) and Saunders et al. (1998) incorporated the extensive use of visual aides in their instructional interventions with English-language learners. Visuals also play a large role in *Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach* [*CALLA*], which has been linked empirically to growth in language development (Gersten & Baker, 2000). Thus, there is some empirical support for the frequent use of visuals to reinforce conceptual development and vocabulary acquisition among English-language learners. The effective use of visuals could range from complex semantic visuals (Reyes & Bos, 1998), to visuals based on text structures, such as story maps and compare-contrast “think sheets.” Even relatively simple techniques such as writing key words on the board or a flip chart while discussing them verbally can support meaningful English language development and comprehension. The use of visuals in supporting English language development may be particularly beneficial because they provide a concrete way for English-language learners to visualize the abstractions of language.

The recent report by the National Research Council (2002) on the over representation of minority students in special education strongly suggested that the use of effective teaching methods in classrooms serving minority students should be one the first and strongest lines of defense in dealing with the inappropriate referral and placement of minority students in special education. For English-language learners, the Research Council was clear in recommending, for example, that small group instructional methods be a consistent and frequent approach in helping English language learners effectively process academic content (such as reading), as well as providing a concrete way for them to develop proficiency in English.

An analysis of instructional interventions for English-language learners indicates that the use of cooperative learning groups and peer tutoring strategies might be useful methods for English-language development, especially academic language with high degrees of cognitive challenge (Gersten & Baker, 2000). However, only a handful of intervention studies have been conducted that have examined the use of small group instructional methods with English-language learners. Klingner and Vaughn (1996) tested whether cooperative learning or peer tutoring was more effective in promoting comprehension with English-language learners with learning disabilities. Although there was some evidence that peer tutoring was the most effective of the two, both interventions led to impressive improvements in learning outcomes. In an intervention used by Muñiz-Swicegood (1994), students worked in successively smaller cooperative groups (until they were finally working in pairs) to learn how to generate and answer questions about what they were reading. Students in this intervention condition did better on measures of reading comprehension than students who were taught using traditional basal reading approaches.

The knowledge base is slowly expanding on how to assist English-language learners in acquiring skills in each of the five beginning reading components. For example, Durgunoglu, Nagy, and

Hancin-Bhatt (1993) found that there is a relationship between phonological awareness in Spanish and word recognition in English. In general, phonological awareness is a significant predictor of performance on word recognition tests, both within and across languages that have an alphabetic structure. Both phonological awareness and word recognition in Spanish transfer to some extent to word recognition in English. This finding has direct implications for the type of activities that teachers should encourage parents to practice at home, regardless of the language the parents prefer to use when carrying out such activities.

Similarly, teachers can use knowledge of the student's spelling development in his/her native language to teach spelling in English. For example, although spelling in Spanish and English develop in similar ways, there are key differences in the way children develop as spellers in each language. A better understanding of the Spanish stages of spelling development can assist teachers in planning and providing key feedback to English-language learners (Ferroli & Krajenta, 1989).

The lack of strong empirical support for any particular approach in teaching English-language learners to read in English suggests that a viable strategy is for Reading First schools to begin with a defensible reading program for English-language learners, in terms of the existing knowledge base. Then, in being sure to carefully evaluate the ongoing success of the plan, it will be necessary to monitor the progress of each English-language learner to make sure that objective measures of progress are linked to decisions about program effectiveness. The Beginning Reading Institutes (BRIs) will have a strand devoted exclusively to how viable reading programs can be set up for English-language learners. The instructional strategies and methods identified will be linked to the five instructional components that serve as the foundation for all Reading First schools and classrooms. This continuity will be essential in making sure English-language learners are not presented with programs that underestimate their knowledge and skill, and most importantly that they are not assigned to programs that underestimate the reading growth these students can make when they are provided with high quality instructional programs. The student assessments will be critical in helping to determine program quality.

In other words, Alaska Reading First schools will monitor the progress of English-language learners using the same assessment system and format that will be used for other students. In terms of meeting, exceeding, or falling below acceptable levels of progress, one of the important challenges of the evaluation conducted by the Alaska Reading First program will be to conduct a rigorous analysis of the performance of English-language learners at each of the assessment time points, and to analyze their progress over time. Disaggregating the data in this manner will allow for the analysis of the performance of English-language learners separately, and compared to other students.

Typical rates of performance of English-language learners, and growth over time, will be closely examined to identify how these students are performing compared to other students, and most importantly, to identify unique factors associated with high levels of performance and growth as well as factors that seem to inhibit growth. Observation instruments that take into account potentially important instructional variables for English-language learners (Haager, Gersten, Graves, & Baker, 2001) will be used in the evaluation component of Reading First to analyze relations between performance, reading growth, and instructional methods. The evaluation will also collect data to determine what effect, if any, different comprehensive reading programs have on the reading performance and growth of English-language learners. The Reading First Director will also devote resources to the analysis of supplemental materials that may be effective in

teaching reading to English-language learners in K-3. As with the comprehensive reading programs and supplemental materials analyzed for use with native English speakers, materials for English-language learners will be evaluated according to the highest principles of scientific research. The Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program in K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis (Simmons & Kame'enui, 2000, Appendix V) will be used for this purpose.

Reading First articulates the importance of a seamless system of delivery of scientifically based reading research instruction to all students, based on individual needs. To make this possible, all staff members in Alaska Reading First Schools will attend Beginning Reading Institutes where key topics such as instructional strategies and practices effective with English Language Learners and other special groups will be carefully studied to achieve this seamless system of all students learning to read. A key component of a seamless system is planning time for teacher teams working with the same students to coordinate lessons. In Beginning Reading Institutes, principals, mentor coaches, and district coordinators will learn ways to facilitate collaboration, coordination, and planning among teacher teams so that classroom teachers and the teachers of English language learners will plan lessons that are aligned with and support the learning needs of individual ELL students in the regular classrooms, in small groups, and in ELL instructional groups.

The Alaska Department of Education &Early Development will convene a panel with expertise in the area of English language learning and scientifically based reading research to develop recommendations for effective reading instruction for English-language learners under Reading First. The Alaska Department of Education &Early Development strongly recommends and requests the USED to assist us in these efforts.

Part C State Definition of Subgrant Eligibility

This section provides Alaska definition of subgrant eligibility and a description of how that definition will result in an applicant pool sufficiently targeted to ensure LEAs receive adequate funding and support, yet broad enough to ensure only applications of the highest quality are funded.

C.1 Definition of LEA Eligibility

Alaska's Unique LEA's

A specific criterion exists to determine whether or not an LEA is eligible for funding. Alaska has decided to focus on the LEAs in most need of support, keeping in mind the diversity and challenges of Alaska LEA's. These conditions include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Of Alaska's 54 school districts, the largest five enroll 70% of Alaska's students. The largest seven enroll 75%. Thirty-nine school districts each enroll fewer than one percent of the student body.

2. Alaska has a large number of very small schools, each with only a handful of teachers. Of 506 schools, 135 schools have fewer than 50 students and 82 enroll 25 or fewer students. One hundred schools, 20% of Alaska's total schools, employ three or fewer teachers. Thirty-six schools employ one teacher; 40, two teachers; 24, three teachers.

3. Of a total student body of more than 134,358, Alaska has 31,400, or about 23.4%, Alaska Native students. With the addition of 1,968 American Indian students, the total Alaska Native/American Indian students enrolled statewide is 33,368, or 24.8% of the total student body.

4. While almost one-quarter of Alaska's student body is composed of Alaska Native/American Indian students, only 398, or fewer than five percent, of Alaska's 8,200 teachers are Alaska Native/American Indian. By contrast, of 2,480 full time equivalent paraprofessionals statewide, 769, or 31% percent, are Alaska Native/American Indian.

5. Alaska has a tremendous range of cultural and language diversity in our communities and schools, particularly in Native villages, but in larger communities as well. In many villages, English is not the primary language used.

6. Most of Alaska's schools are located in remote regions, most with no roads and no other nearby education opportunities for children. These factors create for Alaska extremely high costs and challenging logistics for delivering education, professional development, and transporting students, staff, and technical support professionals in all but the few urban school districts with the largest enrollments. For example:

a. The North Slope Borough School District, with an enrollment of fewer than 2,200 students attending 10 schools, is the nation's largest geographic school district covering 88,000 square miles. Roads do not connect schools. If the North Slope were an individual state it would be our nation's twelfth largest.

b. The Lower Kuskokwim School District, with an enrollment of 3,700 Yup'ik Eskimo students, attending 29 schools, covers 44,000 square miles, an area roughly the size of Ohio. Roads do not connect schools.

c. Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is one of the major "urban" organized school districts in Alaska. It enrolls 9,925 students in 45 schools in 17 communities in a geographic area covering 25,600 square miles, larger than Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire combined. Four villages in the district do not have road access.

d. Yukon-Koyukuk School District, with 12 schools and a student body of 495, encompasses nearly 65,000 square miles in Interior Alaska and has no roads connecting schools. If this district were a state, it would be the twenty-fifth largest in the nation.

To identify the LEAs that would actually meet the criteria for eligible LEA and meet the addition criterion of most need, Alaska started with all of its public elementary schools. An LEA is eligible if:

1) is among the LEAs with the greatest percentage/number* of third grade students not meeting Alaska State reading standards, ***and***

2) the LEA has jurisdiction over at least one of the following:

a. A geographic area that includes an area designated as an empowerment zone, or an enterprise community, under part I of subchapter U of chapter I of the Internal Revenue Code;
b. A significant number or percentage of schools that are identified for school improvement under Title I, Part A; or
c. The highest numbers or percentages of children who are counted for allocations under Title I, Part A, in comparison to other LEAs in the State**

*Greatest percentage is defined as having at least 15% of the LEA 3rd grade student scoring below or not proficient on the State 3rd grade benchmark exam. Greatest number is defined having at least 15 3rd grade students within the LEA scoring below or not proficient on the State 3rd grade benchmark exam.

** Highest numbers is defined as an LEA that has 15% or at least 200 or more students who are counted for Title I purposes. For school sites it is defined as 15% or more students who are counted for Title I purposes.

Required Priority

Priority will be given to districts in which at least:

- 15 percent of the children served by the eligible LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line; ***or***
- 6,500 children served by the eligible LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line. (All districts meet one *or* both of these priority criteria.)

Based on these criteria, 23 of the 53 (43%) Title I school districts are eligible to apply for Reading First Funds. (53 of the states 54 districts receive Title I funding) This represents 193 (64%) of the 300 Title I schools in the state.
See Table C.1, C.2, C.3, C.4 .

This criterion captures both large "urban" districts as well as ensuring that Alaska's rural districts are eligible to apply. See appendix X for draft LEA application.

Table C.1

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Office of Data Management

District Enrollment as of October 1, 2002

FY2003

District	Pre-Elem.	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total KG-12	Total PE-12
Alaska Gateway Schools	9	24	36	33	37	28	30	45	44	50	48	40	38	35	488	497
Aleutian Region Schools	1	2	6	2	5	2	6	6	4	2	6	2	4	5	52	53
Aleutians East Borough Schools	32	18	26	27	21	17	17	23	25	19	22	20	22	16	273	305
Alyeska Central School (state correspondence)	0	22	22	24	28	22	27	42	48	55	158	82	87	107	724	724
Anchorage Schools*	**410**	**3609**	**3637**	**3693**	**3871**	**3853**	**4197**	**4103**	**4252**	**3984**	**3930**	**3659**	**3453**	**3404**	**49645**	**50055**
Annette Island Schools	8	12	19	23	23	19	22	23	30	19	28	19	23	27	287	295
Bering Strait Schools	**8**	**227**	**125**	**125**	**122**	**141**	**154**	**124**	**133**	**165**	**182**	**89**	**89**	**69**	**1745**	**1753**
Bristol Bay Borough Schools	26	12	23	19	17	21	17	13	21	19	20	18	20	16	236	262
Chatham Schools	0	17	9	13	15	17	19	19	24	24	20	21	15	10	223	223
Chugach Schools	10	41	30	17	14	7	13	17	11	10	9	16	14	7	206	216
Copper River Schools	4	58	57	45	54	43	59	54	54	50	69	58	39	38	678	682
Cordova City Schools	12	27	31	25	34	36	44	28	47	41	38	32	40	34	457	469
Craig City Schools	13	80	76	88	75	79	80	80	63	62	56	52	33	36	860	873
Delta/Greely Schools	**21**	**53**	**56**	**48**	**50**	**82**	**76**	**66**	**113**	**87**	**111**	**121**	**90**	**134**	**1087**	**1108**
Denali Borough Schools	8	26	20	15	16	23	23	24	27	30	30	33	26	17	310	318
Dillingham City Schools	**10**	**44**	**42**	**46**	**32**	**43**	**40**	**43**	**39**	**46**	**45**	**37**	**34**	**35**	**526**	**536**
Fairbanks North Star Borough Schools*	**161**	**1038**	**1093**	**1136**	**1171**	**1157**	**1208**	**1290**	**1201**	**1237**	**1573**	**1202**	**976**	**969**	**15251**	**15412**
Galena City Schools	43	449	297	291	348	340	339	304	334	294	254	234	189	173	3846	3889
Haines Borough Schools	1	16	24	18	23	17	28	24	38	25	24	34	26	33	330	331
Hoonah City Schools	2	9	12	11	13	12	14	12	19	19	18	19	17	17	192	194
Hydaburg City Schools	2	3	8	5	8	8	6	8	10	8	6	5	10	9	94	96
Iditarod Area Schools	**5**	**35**	**20**	**32**	**38**	**27**	**31**	**35**	**41**	**41**	**27**	**37**	**23**	**18**	**405**	**410**
Juneau Borough Schools*	**37**	**353**	**369**	**364**	**396**	**449**	**431**	**455**	**500**	**431**	**537**	**454**	**419**	**348**	**5506**	**5543**
Kake City Schools	0	9	11	8	7	10	13	7	11	23	13	12	17	12	153	153
Kashunamiut Schools	**2**	**27**	**31**	**21**	**35**	**22**	**32**	**22**	**32**	**25**	**31**	**27**	**26**	**18**	**349**	**351**
Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools*	**53**	**622**	**582**	**663**	**671**	**699**	**740**	**803**	**794**	**818**	**924**	**858**	**761**	**762**	**9697**	**9750**
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools	**57**	**166**	**152**	**133**	**179**	**148**	**199**	**173**	**208**	**217**	**228**	**210**	**178**	**143**	**2334**	**2391**
Klawock City Schools	1	12	12	9	8	13	13	19	12	10	14	13	7	15	157	158
Kodiak Island Borough Schools	**12**	**210**	**204**	**196**	**198**	**198**	**201**	**229**	**222**	**235**	**269**	**197**	**180**	**203**	**2742**	**2754**

District	Pre-Elem.	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total KG-12	Total PE-12
Kuspuk School District	**37**	**28**	**21**	**34**	**30**	**29**	**41**	**34**	**53**	**39**	**31**	**32**	**27**	**25**	**424**	**461**
Lake & Peninsula Borough Schools	**39**	**29**	**32**	**27**	**27**	**35**	**29**	**38**	**29**	**38**	**34**	**33**	**28**	**39**	**418**	**457**
Lower Kuskokwim Schools	**27**	**346**	**325**	**330**	**453**	**319**	**277**	**288**	**247**	**300**	**268**	**232**	**170**	**144**	**3699**	**3726**
Lower Yukon Schools	**16**	**232**	**143**	**168**	**156**	**162**	**170**	**171**	**159**	**190**	**175**	**113**	**103**	**79**	**2021**	**2037**
Mat-Su Borough Schools*	**137**	**828**	**897**	**964**	**951**	**973**	**1089**	**1148**	**1210**	**1132**	**1355**	**1149**	**1044**	**993**	**13733**	**13870**
Mt. Edgecumbe High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	95	81	89	72	337	337
Nenana City Schools	54	110	113	133	108	109	117	116	109	101	111	114	67	60	1368	1422
Nome City Schools	**5**	**61**	**63**	**50**	**51**	**55**	**81**	**69**	**57**	**62**	**74**	**39**	**35**	**42**	**739**	**744**
North Slope Borough Schools	**0**	**367**	**135**	**131**	**117**	**149**	**132**	**193**	**182**	**160**	**192**	**129**	**118**	**110**	**2115**	**2115**
Northwest Arctic Borough Schools	**19**	**295**	**153**	**127**	**141**	**155**	**188**	**195**	**175**	**179**	**218**	**143**	**102**	**82**	**2153**	**2172**
Pelican City Schools (non Title 1)	0	2	1	3	2	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	3	3	18	18
Petersburg City Schools	7	40	42	44	23	61	42	51	57	46	60	54	58	45	623	630
Pribilof Schools	0	15	8	10	13	7	20	13	10	12	9	6	5	6	134	134
Saint Mary's Schools	0	32	14	12	10	14	13	15	15	17	11	6	6	5	170	170
Sitka Borough Schools	**37**	**110**	**104**	**108**	**133**	**129**	**110**	**104**	**123**	**122**	**139**	**141**	**92**	**130**	**1545**	**1582**
Skagway City Schools	1	4	5	11	5	11	13	8	15	8	8	9	3	16	116	117
Southeast Island Schools	16	16	14	19	11	13	17	17	18	24	21	20	11	17	218	234
Southwest Region Schools	**2**	**63**	**65**	**51**	**70**	**53**	**68**	**58**	**61**	**68**	**60**	**44**	**23**	**35**	**719**	**721**
Tanana Schools	1	7	6	5	4	5	6	8	10	12	7	5	1	4	80	81
Unalaska City Schools	6	40	30	28	36	30	35	20	29	34	33	28	22	25	390	396
Valdez City Schools	14	57	56	53	62	53	76	65	80	56	95	71	76	56	856	870
Wrangell Public Schools	5	23	20	37	38	33	32	37	39	24	41	40	43	30	437	442
Yakutat Schools	0	10	9	7	11	15	9	11	13	16	12	8	9	15	145	145
Yukon Flats Schools	14	21	23	20	19	22	26	32	33	29	25	24	18	15	307	321
Yukon/Koyukuk Schools	**0**	**70**	**77**	**64**	**70**	**85**	**76**	**81**	**83**	**94**	**69**	**67**	**56**	**41**	**933**	**933**
Yupiit Schools	**6**	**42**	**37**	**47**	**33**	**34**	**28**	**34**	**39**	**31**	**47**	**30**	**9**	**11**	**422**	**428**
Statewide Totals:	1391	10069	9423	9613	10083	10084	10775	10899	11203	10840	11881	10219	9074	8810	132973	134364

NOTE: ***Bold-*** *Reading First eligible*

*Five Districts that make up 70% of student pop.

Reading First eligible Totals:	**8855**	**8363**	**8558**	**8995**
Percent of K-3 eligible Statewide Students:	**88%**	**89%**	**89%**	**89%**

Table C.2 Eligible Reading First Districts

Alaska Dept. of Education & Early Development
Title I-A allocations to districts, 2002-2003

Reading First : $2,158,750

	TI CCD # 200-	Title I-A Allocation	% of TIA	min. R. First Allocation	% 3 grade Below/Not-Proficient*	# of 3 grd. Below/Not-Proficient*	Schools of Improvement yes/no
Anchorage	180	$ 9,050,664	0.313894	$677,618.70	21.9%	819	
Bering Strait	020	$ 934,120	0.032397	$69,937.07	63.2%	84	yes
Delta Greely	100	$ 358,774	0.012443	$26,861.24	39.6%	19	
Dillingham City School Dist.	120	$ 120,585	0.004182	$9,028.17	36.40%	16	
Fairbanks	600	$ 2,621,963	0.090935	$196,305.06	15.2%	172	
Iditarod	520	$ 180,960	0.006276	$13,548.36	44.1%	15	
Juneau	210	$ 637,129	0.022097	$47,701.55	19.6%	84	
Kashunamiut	005	$ 207,568	0.007199	$15,540.49	85.0%	17	
Kenai	390	$ 2,150,507	0.074584	$161,007.39	19.5%	132	
Ketchikan Gateway Borough S.D.	150	$ 463,706	0.016082	$34,717.44	18.30%	22	
Kodiak Island Borough Sch. District	480	$ 533,517	0.018503	$39,944.19	27.70%	51	
Kuspuk	760	$ 290,507	0.010075	$21,750.11	69.7%	23	yes
Lake & Peninsula	485	$ 203,070	0.007043	$15,203.73	53.3%	16	
Lower Kuskokwim	001	$ 1,934,033	0.067076	$144,800.09	68.4%	236	yes
Lower Yukon	003	$ 1,457,146	0.050537	$109,095.78	72.9%	113	yes
Matanuska-Susitna	510	$ 2,461,223	0.08536	$184,270.57	15.9%	144	
Nome	570	$ 175,256	0.006078	$13,121.36	53.1%	26	
North Slope	610	$ 293,497	0.010179	$21,973.97	43.2%	67	
Northwest Arctic	625	$ 808,942	0.028056	$60,565.10	55.8%	87	yes
Sitka Borough School District	240	$ 315,656	0.010948	$23,632.99	21.80%	27	
Southwest Region	710	$ 503,800	0.017473	$37,719.25	65.0%	26	yes
Yukon/Koyukuk	862	$ 295,819	0.01026	$22,147.81	52.6%	20	
Yupiit	004	$ 269,425	0.009344	$20,171.69	83.9%	26	yes
						2319	

TOTALS -----> $ 28,833,503

$280,637.50	65%	Per site estimate.	$130,000	$2,158,750
$107,937.50	25%	Total # of Sites, year 1	13-14	$431,750.0
$43,175.0	10%			$1,727,000.0 80% for
$431,750.00	20% state set aside			LEA subgrants

*Spring 2002 State of Alaska 3rd grade Benchmark data.

Table C.3 Eligible Reading First Districts Criteria Formula

	Performance Criteria Must have both boxes shaded		AND	Poverty Criteria Must have at least one box shaded			
District	15% or more 3rd grade students reading below grade level*	15 or more 3rd grade students reading below grade level #		Entitlement or Empowerment Zone	Title I School Improvement	15% or more students are in Title I poverty count**	200 or more students are in Title I poverty count**
Anchorage	21.9%	819				19.1	10430
Bering Strait	63.2%	84			**YES**	51.5	885
Delta Greely	39.6%	19				35.1	373
Dillingham City School Dist.	36.40%	16				23.2	137
Fairbanks	15.2%	172				15.9	2916
Iditarod	44.1%	15				31.6	165
Juneau	19.6%	84				15.0	903
Kashunamiut	85.0%	17				67.6	186
Kenai	19.5%	132				24.0	2862
Ketchikan Gateway Borough S.D.	18.30%	22				17.7	536
Kodiak Island Borough Sch. District	27.70%	51				19.1	622
Kuspuk	69.7%	23			**YES**	53.3	271
Lake & Peninsula	53.3%	16				42.5	201
Lower Kuskokwim	68.4%	236			**YES**	48.4	828
Lower Yukon	72.9%	113			**YES**	67.4	1300
Matanuska-Susitna	15.9%	144				24.6	3569
Nome	53.1%	26				21.9	194
North Slope	43.2%	67				16.6	336
Northwest Arctic	**55.8%**	**87**			**YES**	36.0	**805**
Sitka Borough School District	21.80%	27				20.4	363
Southwest Region	65.0%	26			**YES**	65.6	461
Yukon/Koyukuk	52.6%	20				44.9	254
Yupiit	83.9%	26			**YES**	55.2	250

*Spring 2002 State Reading Benchmark data

**2002-2003 USED approved Title I district allocation data

Table C.4 Reading First School eligibility Criteria Formula

		Performance Criteria				Poverty Criteria		
District	**School**	15% or more of 3rd grade students reading below grade level	**AND**	5 or more 3rd grade students reading below grade level #	**AND**	Title I School Improvement	**OR**	15% or more Students are in Title I poverty count

Part D Selection Criteria For Awarding Subgrants

D.1 Schools to be served

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the criteria LEAs use to identify schools to be served through Reading First, as well as LEAs' capacity to support these schools?

Readiness as a critical element of success

Research shows that readiness is an essential ingredient in effective professional development, especially professional development that guides implementation of new programs and strategies. The Alaska Reading First subgrant application process includes the following two components designed to assist eligible districts in determining which eligible schools are ready to be part of their district's Reading First application:

· An orientation meeting to familiarize districts with the requirements for Reading First Schools, and

· A School Readiness Tool (Appendix IV) to help districts gauge the willingness of school staff and the capacity of school leadership to embrace and implement the required components of Reading First. This process will help assure that only schools ready for Reading First will become Reading First Schools. Districts will use the School Readiness Tool and their knowledge of Reading First requirements to inform and support their decisions about which schools to include in their applications.

STEP ONE: Orientation (see Timeline, appendix VIII)
Eligible districts are required to send a district administrator to the orientation meeting on November 5-7, 2003*, in order to apply for the Reading First grant. Principals of eligible schools are also invited to attend. Topics to be covered at the one -day meeting include:
· Criteria for school eligibility
· Overview of Reading First components and requirements
· Overview of accountability and criteria for future funding based on continuous improvement
· Overview of the School Readiness Tool (Appendix IV)

STEP TWO: Each district will administer the School Readiness Tool to all school staff in those schools meeting the Reading First eligibility requirements.
The School Readiness Tool, developed by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, is based on the Reading First Guidance and is a useful device to help districts determine whether a school is ready to study and implement the components of Reading First. The School Readiness Tool surveys the principal, all K-3 teachers, special education teacher(s), Title 1 teacher(s), and teacher(s) of English language learners, on Reading First criteria such as the following:
· Fluency-based progress monitoring assessment system
· Frequent classroom assessments to inform instruction
· Direct/explicit instruction
· Coaching/mentoring
· Small group flexible instruction for all students
· Selecting from among research-based reading programs
· Leadership capacity and commitment.

STEP THREE: Districts send Letter of Intent to Apply to EED
By January 2, 2004, districts will provide a letter of intent to apply for each of the schools the district has determined is ready, using the School Readiness Tool criteria. This intent to apply contains a commitment statement from each member of the selected eligible school staff that indicates willingness to participate fully in the Reading First grant as a staff member of a Reading First School. Districts will also return a form with a summary of the School Readiness Tool results from eligible schools that the district has determined are not yet ready to be part of the district's Reading First grant application and the reasons why that determination has been made based on the School Readiness Tool criteria. In addition to the letter of intent to apply, the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development may conduct a site visit to the selected eligible schools.

STEP FOUR: Mandatory Grant Writing Workshop for Eligible Districts/Schools
Each eligible district must attend with at least one, preferably two or more, district administrators who will oversee the writing of the district's grant application to the Mandatory Grant Writing Workshop on January 7, 2003*. Teams from the eligible schools that have been selected by their districts must also attend the Mandatory Grant Writing Workshop. Each of the selected schools will send a team of not more than eight staff that must include the following members: the school principal, a teacher from Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, the Title I teacher, the Special Education teacher, and a teacher of English language learners (if applicable). The audio workshop will prepare the district and school teams to address each of the following sections in their grant application: (appendix X)
· Scientifically based reading research requirements of Reading First

· The full range of reading assessments (e.g., screening, diagnosis, progress monitoring, outcomes)
· Comprehensive, supplemental, and intervention reading programs
· Characteristics of a Reading First Classroom
· Accountability.

STEP FIVE: Application Due Date

By March 3 2004*, no later than 4:30 pm., each district will submit an application to the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development on behalf of selected schools.
*pending USED approval

This process is designed to identify and place, in priority order, schools from the applicant pool that demonstrate the greatest need, capacity, motivation, and commitment to participate in the Reading First program. Under this plan, 13-14 schools will receive Reading First support. In addition to these schools, EED plans to invite other eligible school sites to the statewide professional development institutes. Thus, increasing the total number of schools that are receiving Reading First professional development that is based on SBRR.

Proposed Funding: ***- ESTIMATE-***

					Funds	
FY 03-04	per site	$275,000	**Implementation Year 1**		fy02 + fy 03	$3,647,000.00
	Total # of sites	13.26	sites			
FY 04-05	per site	$145,000		$1,920,000.00	fy04	$1,920,000
	Total # of sites	13.24	**Implementation Year 2**			
FY 05-06	per site	$145,000			fy05	$1,920,000
	Total # of sites	13.24	**Implementation Year 3**			
FY 06-07	per site	$145,000			fy06	$1,920,000
	Total # of sites	13.24	**Implementation Year 4**			
FY 07-08	per site	$145,000			fy07	$1,920,000
	Total # of sites	13.24	**Implementation Year 5**			

Site funding will be for 5 years, $275,000 per site for SBRR core and supplemental SBRR professional development, BRI professional development; funding for implementation year one; $145,00 continuation funding thru implementation year 5. ***This dollar amount is based of Alaska's implementation of the READ ALASKA REA program. These figures are estimates, intended to be used a for District planning purposes only, they are not the maximum or minimum amounts that an LEA can request due to the cost differential between large urban sites versus smaller rural sites. It is also intended that districts keep in mind the minimum allocation amount as indicated on page 47, that is based on the Reading First requirement that a district allocation cannot be less than its percent of the overall states Title I allocation. For example, Anchorage School District must identify approximately 5 Reading First sites. (5 sites x $145,000 = 725,000 or equivalent to the required 31.2% of the overall States Reading First allocation)***

In order to ensure a continued focus and support for Reading First sites, LEA's implementation year three budget will clearly indicate a reallocation of Title I, Title II federal funds and the reallocation of Alaska Quality School /Learning opportunity funds in support of the sites schoolwide reading plan. Under this plan, 13-14 of the approximately 193 eligible schools will receive Reading First support. See appendix IX for the Reading First sample budget.

D.2 Instructional Assessments

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the screening, diagnostic and classroom based instructional assessments that LEAs and schools will use, including the validity and reliability of these assessments?

A comprehensive, integrated, efficient, and valid assessment system is a central feature of Alaska Reading First. Reading First requires that three types of assessments be used for the purposes of guiding instruction. Screening instruments are used to identify children in need of extra instructional support, which in Alaska will be delivered through strategic and intensive interventions. Diagnostic assessments will form a critical part of the database for determining a student's specific instructional needs. Progress monitoring assessments are measures that can be administered to students at least three times per year to determine whether adequate rates of progress are being achieved. (http://idea.uoregon.edu/assessment/analysis_results/assess_results_purpose.html) Alaska Reading First will also include outcome assessments for the purpose of determining student learning outcomes at key time points during K-3. (See section 4, Diagnostic Assessments)

A strength of Alaska Reading First will be that all Reading First schools will use a core of common measure to (a) screen students who need additional instructional support, (b) monitor student progress over time, and (c) evaluate outcomes. The common core measure used for the different types of assessment purposes, by beginning reading component and grade, will be the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). In addition, EED has identified other valid and reliable screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring and outcome assessments, particularly in Vocabulary and Comprehension, that all Reading First sites will be required to use in conjunction with the DIBELS assessment, ensuring that all five components of Reading First are assessed (See section 4, pages 110-129 and *Analysis of Reading Assessment Instruments,* Appendix XI) and meet the intended purposes of Reading First. Alaska Reading First districts and schools will be trained by the Alaska Reading First program in the administration and scoring of DIBELS used for screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring purposes and also provide training in the other EED identified measures. The collection and analysis of this measure needed for outcome assessments will be the responsibility of the Reading First Director and the NWREL (Section 3). The evaluation of Alaska Reading First will be discussed in greater detail in Section III.

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) for Screening and Progress Monitoring

DIBELS will be administered to all students in K-3 in Reading First schools at least 3 times per year, roughly corresponding to the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. A significant advantage in having all Reading First schools employ the DIBELS system is that a common database across the state will be available for evaluating the Reading First program, in helping the state fulfill its responsibility to "effectively monitor the academic impact on its recipient LEAs" (Section E-5 (3). The common measurement approach will also facilitate collaboration among Reading First schools to improve the effectiveness of their beginning reading programs.

A strength of the DIBELS system is that the measures can be used to screen students who require more intense reading intervention as well as to systematically monitor the progress of students over time. DIBELS will be administered more frequently than three times per year to measure the progress of students receiving an intervention. The precise number of progress monitoring data points will depend on the severity of the reading problem (i.e., the more severe the problem, the more frequently progress will be monitored).

The DIBELS system is complex. During the first year, the Beginning Reading Institutes (BRI, Section I F) will focus extensively on the components of the system and how the system is connected to the comprehensive reading program and strategic and intensive interventions. DIBELS includes a number of different validated measures (and several experimental measures that are under development). Reading First schools will use several of the validated measures, which will be administered in different combinations at different grades.

DIBELS Measures and Administration Schedule

In kindergarten, two measures of phonemic awareness, one measure of phonics, and one measure that is a strong predictor of reading achievement will be administered. In the Fall of kindergarten, the strong predictor o f reading achievement, Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), and a measure of phonemic awareness, Initial Sound Fluency (ISF), will be administered to all students. Performance on the two measures will be used to screen kindergarten students for reading interventions. Performance on LNF will not be used to screen students for reading interventions because the ability to identify letter names is a mediating variable in terms of reading performance, not a causal variable. That is, the ability to name letters quickly and accurately will not on its own lead to better reading outcomes, whereas teaching students fluency in phonemic awareness skills will lead to better reading outcomes.

In the winter of kindergarten, the same two measures will be given, plus two additional measures. A second measure of phonemic awareness, Phonemic Segmentation fluency (PSF), and a measure of phonics, Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), will be administered. Growth from Fall to Winter will be determined for ISF (growth on LNF will not e determined). Benchmark performance on all of the measures will be determined and criteria based on student performance on the combination of measures will be used to screen students for reading interventions.

In the spring of kindergarten, three of the four measures that were administered in the winter will be administered. The ISF measure will not be administered because for the vast majority of students, performance on this measure will have approached ceiling (the top score) on the winter assessment. The most important phonemic awareness measure on the spring assessment is PSF. As in the winter, growth on the various measures will be assessed, benchmark performance at the spring of kindergarten will be determined, and screening decisions made for reading interventions.

In the Fall of first grade, LNF (a predictor of reading), PSF (a measure of phonemic awareness), and NWF (a measure of phonics) will be administered. Growth for those students who were assessed in kindergarten will be determined, benchmark performance analyzed, and screening decisions for reading interventions made. In the Winter of Grade 1, LNF will no longer be administered because its ability to predict reading achievement is better left to other measures that are also excellent intervention targets. The best predictor of reading achievement is reading using Curriculum-Based Measurement procedures (RCBM) (Deno, 1985), which will be administered for the first time. R-CBM, a measure of reading fluency, is one of the most thoroughly investigated and psychometrically strong measures of overall reading proficiency available (Shinn, 1998). The vitality of the measure is particularly great in the early primary grades. One of the most important aspects of RCBM is that many studies have established that the measure is highly correlated with reading comprehension (Fuchs et al., 2001; Marston, 1989). Consequently, the use of RCBM as a valid and critical indirect measure of reading comprehension can be one key aspect of gauging the comprehension skills of students. The strong correlation between RCBM and direct measures of reading comprehension is further supported by a strong theoretical basis for the relationship (Shinn, Good, Knutson, Tilly, Collins, 1992).

Beginning with the Winter of Grade 1, R-CBM will be administered at each measurement period to the end of Grade 3. In the Spring of Grade 1, Phonemic Segmentation Fluency, Nonsense Word Reading Fluency, and R-CBM will be administered to all Reading First students and benchmark performance will be determined and screening decisions made regarding the need for reading interventions.
In addition, measures included in the DIBELS 6th will be administered; these include:

- DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF) is a standardized, individually administered test of accuracy and fluency with connected text. The DORF passages and procedures are based on the program of research and development of Curriculum-Based Measurement of Reading by Stan Deno and colleagues at the University of Minnesota and using the procedures described in Shinn (1989). A version of CBM reading also has been published as The Test of Reading Fluency (TORF) (Children's Educational Services, 1987). DORF is a standardized set of passages and administration procedures designed to (a) identify children who may need additional instructional support, and (b) monitor progress toward instructional goals. The passages are calibrated for the goal level of reading for each grade level. Student performance is measured by having students read a passage aloud for one minute. Words omitted, substituted, and hesitations of more than three seconds are scored as errors. Words self-corrected within three seconds are scored as accurate. The number of correct words per minute from the passage is the oral reading fluency rate.

- Retell Fluency (RTF) is intended to provide a comprehension check for the DORF assessment. In general, oral reading fluency provides one of the best measures of reading competence, including comprehension, for children in first through third grades. The purpose of the RTF measure is to (a) prevent inadvertently learning or practicing a misrule, (b) identify children whose comprehension is not consistent with their fluency, (c) provide an explicit linkage to the core components in the NRP report, and (d) increase the face validity of the DORF.

    1. The misrule that we want to prevent is that speed-reading without attending to meaning is either desirable or the intent of the oral reading fluency measure. With a prompted retell, children will be less likely to conclude that simply reading as fast as they can is the desired behavior, and teachers will be less likely to imply that simply reading as fast as they can is desired.

    2. Teachers frequently are concerned about children who read fluently and do not comprehend. This pattern is infrequent - but may apply to some children. This procedure may identify those children without unduly increasing the amount of time spent in the assessment.

    3. The National Reading Panel (2000) report is clear on the core components of early reading, and DIBELS maps explicitly onto the first three. Retell Fluency is included to provide a brief measure with an explicit score that corresponds directly to the comprehension core component.

    4. A primary concern teachers have about oral reading fluency is the face validity of the measure. Incorporation of an explicit comprehension check may help teachers feel increasingly comfortable with oral reading fluency.

- DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF) is a measure that assesses fluency with text, the ability to translate letters-to-sounds-to-words fluently, effortlessly. The fluent reader is one whose decoding processes are automatic, requiring no concious attention. Such capacity then enables readers to allocate their attention to the comprehension and meaning of the text. To learn more about fluency with text, visit the Big Ideas in Beginning Reading: Fluency pages.

- Retell Fluency (RTF) is a measure that assesses comprehension, the ability to extract meaning from text. To learn more about comprehension, visit the Big Ideas in Beginning Reading: Comprehension pages.

Recommended Administration Periods

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency and Retell Fluency are given in Winter and Spring of First Grade, and Fall, Winter, and Spring of Second and Third Grades.

Technical Adequacy Information

- Oral Reading Fluency: A series of studies has confirmed the technical adequacy of CBM reading. Test-retest reliabilities for elementary students ranged from .92 to .97; alternate form reliability of different reading passages drawn from the same level ranged from .89 to .94 (Tindal, Marston & Deno, 1983). Criterion-

related validity studied in eight separate studies in the 1980's reported coefficients ranging from .52 to .91 (Good & Jefferson, 1998).

- Retell Fluency: Preliminary evidence indicates that the Retell Fluency measure correlates with oral reading fluency about .59. It appears children's retell scores may be typically about 50% of their oral reading fluency score, and that it is unusual for children reading more than 40 words per minute to have a retell score 25% or less than their oral reading fluency score. A rough rule of thumb may be that, for children whose retell is about 50% of their oral reading fluency score, their oral reading fluency score provides a good overall indication of their reading proficiency, including comprehension. But, for children who are reading over 40 words per minute and whose retell score is 25% or less of their oral reading fluency, their oral reading fluency score alone may not be providing a good indication of their overall reading proficiency. For example, a child reading 60 words correct in one minute would be expected to use about 30 words in their retell of the passage. If their retell is about 30, then their oral reading fluency of 60 is providing a good indication of their reading skills. If their retell is 15 or less, then there may be a comprehension concern that is not represented by their fluency.

In Grades 2 and 3, the measurement approach for monitoring performance at least three times per year will be simplified. At all three time points in second and third grade, students will be assessed on using the DIBELS 6th addition timeline. Determinations of reading progress, and decisions about reading interventions will be made largely based on performance on this measure. At the end of Grade 3, all students will also be administered the Alaska State Assessment. The reading subtest on Alaska State Assessment will be used to provide additional information about the impact of Reading First.

The DIBELS measurement system contains multiple forms on all measures for frequent administration to monitor progress as regularly as needed. The measures are also quick to administer (e.g., All measures are 1 -minute fluency measures) so for any particular child only a small amount of time is taken up with test administration, even when progress is monitored on a frequent basis.

Materials and training on all DIBELS assessments, as well as training in how the data are used, will be provided at the Beginning Reading Institutes. During the first year of a school's participation in Reading First, district and school personnel will learn to collect data on all DIBELS measures. In the fall, as part of the evaluation requirements of Reading First data will be collected in all Reading First schools. Each Reading First School will have the training and resources necessary to collect all of the DIBELS data on their own. School data collection responsibilities will continue in Year 2 and the subsequent years.

DIBELS data at all Reading First schools will be entered at the school site by personnel trained in data entry. These data are stored in a DIBELS web-based system, which is part of the Technology and Dissemination Unit of Reading First. Schools and classroom teachers can access the DIBELS web-based system through a password-protected

protocol. The DIBELS website currently contains information on approximately 836 active schools, and over 120,000 students.

DIBELS Sample Report

Once the data are entered, classroom teachers, principals, and other LEA staff members will be able to instantly access computer-generated reports that summarize the data at multiple levels. A sample report for kindergarten at one school is presented in (Appendix VII). The first part of the report provides information at the school level. On PSF, LNF, and NWF, benchmark performance at the winter assessment (in January) is presented for all kindergarten students in the school. The number of students who have what are labeled as established skills or emerging skills in phonemic awareness and phonics (established is high performance, emerging is average to low average performance), or who have a skill deficit (at-risk and clearly require intervention) is clearly indicated. In this particular school, 44% of the students have established phonemic awareness skills, 49% have emerging skills, and 7% have a skill deficit.

The second part of the report presents performance at the classroom level. The skills for each student in each classroom (in this case in Teacher A's classroom) are presented. The individual teacher report lists each student, their score on each measure, the percentile rank for their score, whether each score corresponds to established, emerging, or deficit performance, and the instructional recommendation for each individual student. Instructional recommendations are provided at one of three levels: (a) general education instruction, without modifications being needed (called benchmark instruction—i.e., students are on track for meeting benchmark performance standards in reading), (b) a strategic intervention, or (c) an intensive intervention.

These school and teacher reports will also be part of the assessment materials that the evaluation component of Reading First will work on with Reading First schools to meet the requirement that Reading First schools report end of year outcomes in all essential components of reading growth.

D.3 Instructional Strategies and Programs

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the instructional strategies and programs based on SBRR that LEAs and schools will use?

Selecting a comprehensive program is clearly one of the most critical decisions facing a Reading First LEA or school. A comprehensive reading program is "the primary instructional tool that teachers use to teach children to learn to read and ensure they reach reading levels that meet or exceed grade-level standards. A comprehensive program should address the instructional needs of the majority of students in a respective school or district." (Simmons & Kame'enui, 2002).

The design requirements of a comprehensive reading program that is able to meet the instructional needs of 75-80 percent of the students in any given classroom are considerable. The demands of the phonologic, alphabetic, semantic, and syntactic systems of written language require a careful sequence of prioritized objectives, explicit strategies, and scaffolds that support students' initial learning and the ability to apply that

knowledge in multiple contexts. The requirements of curriculum construction and instructional design that effectively moves children through the learning-to-read stage to the reading-to-learn stage are too important to leave to the judgment of individuals. The better the comprehensive program addresses instructional priorities, the less teachers will need to supplement and modify instruction for the majority of learners. (Simmons & Kame'enui, 2002).

Reading First Schools will select scientifically based comprehensive reading programs, without layering selected programs on top of non-research based programs already in use. Schools will use grant funds to replace previously purchased programs. Materials and programs without scientifically based research will not be used in Reading First Schools.

It is an extremely complex and time-consuming task to analyze the instructional design quality of comprehensive reading programs. We believe asking LEAs and schools to conduct thorough evaluations of comprehensive programs and supplemental materials are an unreasonable request. Without specialized training and a larger time commitment than is currently the case with LEA and school review teams, the analysis tasks would have to be done with a series of compromises that would restrict the potential quality of the decisions made. For these reasons, state level Reading First staff will work in partnership with other Reading First SEAs to select comprehensive reading programs that meet scientific standards for design construction and evidence of effectiveness. Specifically, Alaska will provide approved program lists from the State of Florida, Washington, and Oregon. Proposed programs that were not reviewed by the State of Florida, Washington and Oregon, either because they were not yet published or for some other reason, will be reviewed by the Reading First staff who will work with Florida, Washington and Oregon to review these programs.

All K-3 grades within a school will use the same comprehensive program to facilitate communication among teachers, enable within-class, across-class, and across-grade grouping, and maximize resources for professional development. Schools will select a program as one of their first activities connected with the Reading First Program.

Applicants will describe if and how they will integrate their own plans for professional development within the professional development framework of the Reading First program. To do this, applicants will describe their current procedures for helping teachers use effective instructional strategies in the classroom, and how those techniques are aligned with the scientific basis of early reading instruction.

Finally, Reading First applicants will be asked to describe their student population, focusing in particular on students for whom they believe the comprehensive reading program will be sufficient to meet reading goals, and students for whom they believe additional instructional supports will be necessary. For example, our experience has been that a strong, well-implemented comprehensive program will meet the instructional needs of approximately 75-80 percent of the students in typical classrooms. Further, we can predict with a fairly high degree of accuracy that students with low performance levels at the beginning of the school year, students who live in poverty, and minority students, will be more likely to require reading interventions to achieve satisfactory rates of progress. Reading First applicants will be asked to describe the students for whom they believe the comprehensive reading program will be sufficient to achieve satisfactory progress, and which students they believe might be in need of reading interventions.

Reading interventions will fall into two general categories. For approximately 20 percent of the students in typical classrooms, adequate rates of progress will be achieved with strategic interventions that require the use of supplemental materials. For approximately 5-10 percent of the students in typical classrooms, adequate rates of progress will not be achieved unless intensive interventions are used that are individually developed to meet a student's needs. These numbers may vary for schools serving large percentages of English language learners. We expect schools will be familiar with the types of students who might fall into these two intervention categories, as well as familiar with some of the intervention strategies that might be used to boost growth. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate their knowledge of students who are not making sufficient progress, including approximately how many students might fall into each of the intervention categories, and examples of intervention approaches that they believe might be effective in increasing growth.

D.4 Instructional Materials

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the instructional materials based on SBRR that LEAs and schools will use?

Less precise information is available on the scientific evidence of the supplemental materials that are used with students who are not making sufficient reading progress. In general, more scientific evidence is available on the effectiveness of interventions for students with severe reading problems as opposed to the effectiveness of interventions for students with less severe reading difficulties (e.g., students with reading disabilities compared to students in Title I). The State of Florida has conducted an analysis of effective supplemental reading programs and materials and identified approximately 20 interventions that have sufficient evidence for their use as supplemental materials for students with reading difficulties. The Alaska Reading First staff will rely on Oregon's analysis of the work of Florida, using the Consumer's Guide to Beginning Reading Programs, to identify a corpus of supplemental programs and procedures that Alaska Reading First schools can select from in identifying interventions for students who need extra reading support.

For supplemental materials not reviewed by Florida, Washington, and Oregon, but for which the State of Alaska believes there may be sufficient evidence for their use, the Reading First Staff will work with these states in reviewing these supplemental programs. The Alaska Reading First staff will work closely with these SEA's (another major component of Alaska Reading First, designed to build networking infrastructure between Reading First States, discussed in Section 2) to identify potential supplemental materials that would meet the review criteria and that would be of benefit to Reading First schools.

Reading First LEAs and schools will select from these reviewed supplemental materials to improve the reading performance of students whose instructional needs are not being adequately addressed through the comprehensive reading program. We predict this may be 20-25 percent of the students in a typical K-3 classroom. Reading First LEAs and schools will describe the types of students they believe might fall into this category, including the number of students at each grade level. If a Reading First LEA chooses to select supplemental materials that are not on the list, the LEA can request that the Reading First staff in conjunction with other SEA's, review the program.

Supplemental materials are not limited for use with those students who require interventions on the basis of their reading performance. Supplemental materials, including print materials and technology, may also be part of an overall reading program for all students, or they may be part of a program for certain groups of students such as students with disabilities or English-language learners, as appropriate. If Reading First LEAs and schools are planning to use supplemental materials for purposes other than interventions, it will be important for them to clearly describe the purpose of the supplement, for whom the supplement is intended, and to describe how the supplement will be used in support of the comprehensive reading program. In other words, Reading First LEAS and schools must describe how the comprehensive reading program remains a central feature for all Reading First students.

D.5 Instructional Leadership

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the instructional leadership that LEAs and schools will provide for their scientifically based reading programs?

Applicants will be asked to describe how the school will function as the central structure for school improvement and high levels of student performance in reading in K-3. This will require strong administrative leadership from LEAs and schools, and classroom teachers who work closely with administrators, teacher colleagues, and Reading First mentor coaches to do three things. First, classroom teachers must teach a comprehensive beginning reading program that focuses on the five essential beginning reading components. Second, classroom teachers must use a comprehensive set of instructional strategies and approaches that effectively teaches these components to all students. Third, when classroom-based student performance data indicate that students are not making adequate progress, classroom teachers must play the primary role in making sure that research-based interventions are implemented that align with the comprehensive reading program.

This is a significant challenge for teachers that will only be attained with the strong support of administrative leadership. Reading First leadership must have an active and consistent presence throughout funding of Reading First and beyond. This leadership is not just to provide teachers with the resources they need to implement the comprehensive reading program and interventions, but it requires that administrators and other leaders to be active participants from the beginning (as opposed to primarily responding to problems that arise, for example) and understand issues of effective implementation at the individual classroom level.

The leadership structure provided by LEAs and schools will exist at multiple levels through: (1) school-based reading teams and principal leadership, (2) classroom mentor coaches, and (3) LEA based SBRR Leaders. It will be the applicant's task to describe how within their existing school structures they envision these different leadership structures being effectively integrated.

Ensuring Leadership Commitment and Support.

The state will provide training for LEA and school leaders in the scientific basis for effective reading programs, implementation and management process needed for Reading First, and methods of progress monitoring and database decision-making. Therefore,

LEAs must address what the LEA leadership will do beyond that to support high quality implementation of its Reading First program.

LEAS must indicate who will provide overall SBRR leadership for Reading First efforts at the LEA level. This can be done by providing an organizational chart showing the leadership relationships between LEA personnel and school personnel and briefly describe those relationships. At least one of the named leaders has to have sufficient authority to ensure that Reading First is implemented fully and properly. LEAs must also provide a description of the following leadership functions, who will provide them, and the time commitments to these functions:

1. Providing technical assistance to schools in the evaluation of instructional materials and assessments that meet both state standards and SBRR standards;
2. Helping schools with setting goals and benchmarks;
3. Developing budgets related for Reading First programs;
4. Assisting schools that do not make adequate progress in the first two years to make adjustments to their programs;
5. Coordinating the local evaluation of school progress toward Reading First goals;
6. Analyzing and interpreting achievement data; and
7. Making school and classroom data based decisions.

Training for Principals, Building Leaders, and other LEA Personnel. LEAs must describe their plans for providing mandatory training for principals and building leaders in the essential components of reading and the specific instructional programs and materials in use in their buildings, including the scientific basis, implementation process and progress monitoring related to those programs and materials. LEAs must provide responses to the following:

1. Who will provide leadership training for Reading First efforts at the LEA level? This description should include the SBRR qualifications of the training providers.
2. Does the LEA have policies and plans to promote continuity of leadership training? Copies should be included in the application.
3. How will the leaders at the LEA and school levels become knowledgeable about the essential components of effective reading programs as well as the specific instructional programs and materials used in their buildings? The plan should include activities for ensuring that building principals are adequately prepared and supported in their roles as instructional leaders in their schools.
4. What is the role of coaches in LEA and school leadership? The application could describe how coaches can assist in planning professional development across schools in the LEA, developing grade level instructional teams at each school to monitor progress in reading, making data based decisions about instruction, and coordinating the screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based assessments.
5. How will local resources provide part of the leadership effort for Reading First*?*

Reading First Mentor Coaches

One of the leadership mechanisms that will function nearest to the level of classroom implementation will be Reading First mentor coaches. Ideally, classroom mentor coaches would be excellent teachers who will receive training in the comprehensive reading program being used in their Reading First school, in principles of effective reading instruction, and in the use of DIBELS to assess reading performance. Mentor coaches

also should have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with other teachers. The state will provide training for training mentor coaches based on Alaska Mentor Standards that will be endorsed by the Alaska State School Board in January 2003. (Appendix I) Mentor coaches will work closely with classroom teachers on implementation and they will work with other leaders on effective schoolwide implementation of reading practices.

Applicants will need to adequately budget fiscal resources for Reading First mentor coaches. They will be asked to describe how the responsibilities of the Reading First mentor coaches will be effectively integrated within the school's ongoing routines and structures. It will be important that mentor coaches not be assigned to directly provide instruction to children on an ongoing or "substitute" basis. It is also important that mentor coaches not be designated to carry out essentially clerical tasks, such as ordering, distributing, and managing Reading First materials.

Mentor coaches and building principals will work together to build a cohesive atmosphere among teachers for the purpose of engaging in professional dialogue and offering each other support and assistance. Mentor coaches will have a key role in helping to shape the culture of the school so its support for quality beginning reading programs becomes and remains an essential objective above and beyond formal funding of Reading First.

Both mentor coaches and principals will also become resident experts in the DIBELS data system and will work with teachers on data interpretation and making appropriate instructional decisions based on data. Principals and mentor coaches will assemble grade level instructional teams to monitor individual and classroom level progress in reading and to make data based decisions about instruction.

D.6 District and School-Based Professional Development

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the professional development plan related to the scientifically based reading program the districts and schools will implement?

Clear Plan and Process for Delivery of Professional Development.

The state of Alaska will work cooperatively with Reading First schools in the provision of high quality professional development, targeting effective administrative support as well as effective classroom implementation. Professional development activities will be based on principles of effective staff development derived from scientific research. The overall professional development plan for Reading First teachers and administrators in Alaska's Reading First schools is composed of four interconnected elements. The integration of these four elements will be a key goal of the Reading First program.

1. Beginning Reading Institutes (BRI, Section I, F) will be held for teachers, mentor coaches, principals, and other personnel involved in Reading First implementation. These institutes, aligned to the Grade 3 Reading standards, will be organized and delivered by the Beginning Reading Institutes contractor (section F) and will involve the participation of all Reading First schools. The focus of these institutes will be on the science of beginning reading, comprehensive reading programs that are constructed according to principles of the scientific knowledge base, instructional strategies for effectively teaching the comprehensive program and reading

interventions, and assessing reading performance for different purposes and at different points in time.

2. Beginning Reading Institutes will play a key role in building cohesion among Reading First teams in each region, in developing each school's capacity to carry out Reading First implementation, and in extending the Reading First model to other schools throughout the state. These institutes will play an important role in providing assistance to Reading First mentor coaches.

3. School-based Reading First teams will ensure that the day-to-day implementation of the Reading First program is operating smoothly. Both within grade and across grade teams will work to make sure the comprehensive programs are being used as intended, that interventions are being delivered to students who need them, and that the assessment information on student performance is being collected on schedule and is being used to make instructional decisions. By serving as the team leader on the school-based teams, the building principal will ensure that Reading First remains a strong school priority. Building principals also ensure that schoolwide implementation is occurring on schedule and with a high degree of fidelity, and that support for individual classroom teachers is provided in a timely and effective manner.

4. Reading First mentor coaches will be work closely with classroom teachers to ensure that the comprehensive program and strategic and intensive interventions are delivered as outlined in the Beginning Reading Institutes. They will work with teachers individually on specific implementation issues and with groups of teachers on conceptual aspects of beginning reading as well as particularly thorny implementation issues. Mentor coaches will also have a key role with the building principal in making sure that teachers are interpreting and using the classroom based assessments according to principles outlined in the of Beginning Reading Institutes.

Coordinating Local and State Professional Development. LEAs are asked only to include assurances that the LEA leaders, teachers and other personnel associated with Reading First will attend statewide professional development activities, provide extensive SBRR professional development in the selected program by state approved SBRR professional development providers(see page 75-76), and that resources have been set-aside in the LEA Reading First budget for this purpose.

D.7 District-Based Technical Assistance

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the technical assistance districts will provide to participating schools relating to the implementation of Reading First?

District and school based professional development will be coordinated through the Beginning Reading Institutes. An important aspect of ensuring that schools are receiving high quality professional development that is specific to their needs, LEAs will describe how the support they provide individual schools will be integrated within the Reading First professional development framework. LEA support and ongoing professional development that is tailored to the specific needs of schools and classroom teachers will be guided by the classroom-based assessment data that each school will collect on all K-3 students. To understand how this process might work, consider the hypothetical case

when all K-3 students in the school are making adequate reading progress and reaching benchmark levels of performance. In that case, when both Reading First schools and LEAs analyze the data, very few adjustments would seem to be warranted and a likely conclusion might be that the professional development structure is meeting the needs of students, teachers, and schools.

Of course, not all students in a school, or even in a classroom, are likely to be making adequate reading progress. A key objective of Reading First is being able to respond to students who require additional instructional support as early as possible. Thus, LEAs will be working most closely with schools when there is evidence that students require additional support. LEAs will want to make sure that schools are accurately identifying students who require additional instructional supports and are providing those students with appropriate interventions in a timely manner. When schools have trouble providing timely, effective support, LEAs should be able to respond quickly and provide the additional assistance schools need to meet Reading First objectives. In their applications, LEAs will also describe the following concrete forms of assistance they will provide to individual Reading First schools:

1. Providing positive attention, recognition, and support for Reading First schools throughout the district.
2. Providing resources for the ongoing data collection activities that will occur multiple times per year in all K-3 Reading First classrooms.
3. Assisting schools to incorporate the grade-level goals and benchmarks of Alaska's Reading First grant into their school-based professional development plans and to write plans that include a comprehensive professional development support system for teachers who need additional assistance in order to provide the instruction necessary to enable their students to meet the grade-level expectations of the Reading First grant.
4. Assisting schools in writing school-based reports for parents, the school board, and the Director of Reading First on Reading First implementation and progress.
5. Providing substitute pay as needed to provide teachers opportunities to collaborate, study, observe others, debrief on observations, explore and use the "Big Ideas in Reading" and the "Reading First" websites, visit other Reading First Schools, etc.

D.8 Evaluation Strategies

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the (a) methods LEAs will use to assess the effectiveness of Reading First activities for the LEA as well as for individual participating schools, and (b) plans for using this outcome information to make decisions about continuation funding for participating schools?

LEA Evaluation Plan to Document the Effectiveness of Its Reading First Program at the Building and LEA Levels.

The LEA's evaluation process should consider the effectiveness of program implementation as well as the extent to which program outcomes have been met. The application must indicate how the information derived from this process will be used in planning school improvement, measuring progress toward school goals, identifying professional development needs, clarifying instructional objectives provided by the LEA

or state, and identifying needs for additional leadership and other support. The LEA's evaluation plan must address the following in order to be responsive:

• ***First:*** districts will provide data from the DIBELS progress monitoring system and end of year outcome assessments in a timely fashion to the Reading First staff. For the DIBELS data, this will be relatively easy because once the data are entered; the Reading First staff has the information it needs to analyze the data. Districts will also provide the data from the other mandatory progress monitoring instruments as outlined in Pages 107-110 and Table I page 119.

• ***Second:*** districts will designate assessment personnel from existing resources or budget the use of Reading First funds to pay for the cost of collecting the assessment data related to screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring decisions. As part of the evaluation task, the BRI will train district personnel in test administration and efficient methods for organizing the testing in Reading First schools. Consultants at the BRI will have extensive experience in this area. Districts teams will collect data each Fall, Winter and Spring. To help districts plan for the costs of participating in the evaluation and progress monitoring assessments, we have outlined in the sample budget, the personnel needs, training schedule, and assessment plan to be used in Reading First schools. Districts will follow this plan as part of their participation in Reading First.

After a site has been notified of its award and identified personnel to serve as mentor coaches, the mentor coaches along with other individuals who will serve on assessment teams (e.g., school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, part-time teachers, instructional assistants, retired teachers, etc.) will be trained to administer the screening and progress monitoring instruments for the Fall assessment (training takes approximately one full day). Districts will budget the necessary resources for training and for conducting the assessments in the Reading First schools. Master trainers from the BRI who have extensive experience training testers in these procedures will conduct the training. During the first month of the school year, or as close to that target date as possible, the Fall K-3 assessment will occur. Mentor coaches will be responsible for coordinating and assisting with the assessment at their school(s). We estimate that the testing will be completed, including “make up” testing of absent students, during a two-week period.

Each district assessment team will be responsible for testing all K-3 students at the Reading First schools in that district. Members of the team will be assigned to enter the data on the web-based DIBELS data entry system. The Beginning Reading Institutes will train teachers to administer the DIBELS measures. A combination of the District data collection team and a school data collection team will be responsible for data collection. Approximately five school members will serve as the school-based data collection team. The data will be collected and will be entered onto the DIBELS web-based system.

• ***Third:*** Districts will provide yearly implementation reports set up by the Reading First staff and the Northwest Regional Education Lab. This is to ensure that uniform descriptive data about each Reading First program in the state is provided for overall evaluation purposes. Districts will be responsible for ensuring that all assessment data and report information is submitted in an accurate and timely fashion.

• ***Fourth:*** districts will cooperate with state or national level external evaluation agencies who may need to plan a site visit or request information in order to complete their evaluations. In addition to implementing the assessment measures in Reading First schools, schools eligible for Reading First funds may also be approached to participate in the evaluation as a control group. The district must include steps for reporting data for all students and categories of students described in the state's adequate yearly progress definition (i.e., low-income students, major racial/ethnic groups, limited-English proficient students, and students with disabilities).

• ***Fifth:*** *Using the Findings of Formative Evaluations to Make Data-driven Decisions for the Continuous Improvement of the Reading First Program.* Formative evaluation is proactive and focuses on the implementation of the Reading First grant and its impact on teachers, students, administrators and other participants. This type of evaluation is aimed at monitoring and improving programs. LEAs must demonstrate how they will use data from the formative evaluation data and findings for continuous improvements such as the following:

- Making changes in curriculum, instruction, assessments, professional development, coordination and other activities;
- Improving the monitoring of student progress and the implementation of the program;
- Recommending how the implementation can be improved over time; and
- Improving the leadership and support teachers receive.

D.9 Access to Print Materials

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate the programs and strategies LEAs and schools will use to provide student access to engaging reading materials?

Providing Access to a Wide Array of Engaging Reading Materials that Include Expository and Narrative Texts. LEAs must provide a detailed listing of strategies they will use to increase the availability and use of engaging and appropriate reading material in both the classroom and school libraries. LEAs that demonstrate imagination, variety and quantity of strategies will be considered more responsive. There are a variety of state and local organizations that can participate in partnerships with LEAs to provide access to materials and programs that promote reading. Those partnerships could include the local public library, Community volunteer programs, and Reading is Fundamental programs are able to provide an additional source of engaging reading material and can help create home libraries that are a critical component of access to reading materials.

Reading Beyond the School. Many children who attend schools that are characterized by high-poverty and low-student achievement often have little or no access to reading opportunities or materials beyond the school. LEAs should include strategies for expanding reading horizons beyond the school, including family literacy, access to public libraries and other community sources of books, and use of technology.

D.10 Additional Criteria

How will the subgrant selection process evaluate any additional uses of funds by LEAs and schools? What, if any, additional criteria will the SEA use in its subgrant selection process?

None.

D.11 Competitive Priorities

How will the subgrant selection process apply the required competitive priority? What, if any, additional competitive priorities will the SEA use in its subgrant selection process?

Required Priority

Priority will be given to districts in which at least:

- 15 percent or 200 of the children served by the eligible LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line; or
- 6,500 children served by the eligible LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line.

Additional Competitive Priority

None

Part E Process for Awarding Subgrants

What process will the SEA use to award Reading First sub grants to eligible LEAs, including the number and size of anticipated sub grants, a timeline for the sub grant process, and a description of the review process? How will the SEA disseminate information about the Reading First program and the SEA's sub grant process to eligible LEAs?

Alaska proposes to fund projects over five years at a yearly average of $168,000 per school, *provided that the overall percentage of Reading First funds allocated to the LEA is not less than the percentage of funds received under Title 1 A the previous year*. This will enable Alaska to fund approximately 13-14 Reading First Schools across the state during the life of the grant. Because of the comprehensive scope of our proposed sub-grants, it is essential that districts be both well informed and well prepared for the obligations and expectations that accompany Reading First dollars.

Once the State of Alaska Reading First application has been approved, district eligibility notification will be made through electronic and hardcopy newsletters and the list of Alaska's 23 eligible districts with minimum sub grant amounts will be posted on the EED website (www.eed.state.ak.us). Eligible districts, as determined by the eligibility criteria, will also receive written notification from the Commissioner of Education and the Reading First Director. Written notification will include:

- An overview of the program and accountability requirements of Alaska Reading First,
- Eligibility requirements for schools and a list of the district's eligible schools,
- The minimum sub grant amount for each eligible LEA (not to be less than the percentage of Title 1A funds received by the district in the previous year), and
- A timeline of required technical assistance meetings and grant deadlines, as outlined in Section D1, pages 49-51. These steps outline an LEA application process that is extremely comprehensive to ensure that all Reading First requirements are met.

A six-member review panel will review LEA subgrant applications. Members of the review panel will be selected from a carefully chosen group of experts who have deep

knowledge of the instructional strategies and approaches envisioned by Reading First. All panelists will be able to identify whether the five core components of effective instruction are implemented according to an effective design. Additionally, reviewers will also have the extensive familiarity with the following documents:

- *Put Reading First;*
- The National Reading Panel's report, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implications for Reading Instruction*– executive summary and Report of the Subgroups; and
- *Preventing Reading Difficulty in Young Children;*
- Understanding of the definition of SBRR and the work of NICHD-funded researchers, and;
- Knowledge about the five essential components of effective reading instruction, as defined by Reading First.

EED will ensure that panelists do not have conflicts of interest either through financially benefiting from products or services that are recommended by Reading First or as a grant writer for an application. The review panelists will be trained in the model the U.S. Department of Education review panels will use to award SEA grants. LEA applications will be judged additionally in terms of application guidelines using a scoring rubric. Both of these documents will be available to eligible districts at or before the application workshops. For any LEA subgrant where there are questions, the chair of the review panel may elect to consult with an outside advisor from the U.S. Department of Education, Washington, or Oregon. These outside advisors can provide objective opinions where needed to determine if a plan meets the requirements of Reading First as intended in the law. The panel chair may request a site visit with an applicant district. Determining whether a site visit is required before funding is entirely at the discretion of the chair of the review panel. See appendix X for LEA application.

Part F State Professional Development Plan

What is the SEA's plan for Professional Development related to the Reading First program? How will teachers statewide receive PD in the essential components of

reading instruction, using scientifically based instructional strategies, programs, and materials, and using screening, diagnostic, and classroom based instructional assessments?

Alaska: A Unique and Challenging Environment

"You couldn't have described this situation to us adequately to get the understanding we've gained as a result of seeing it with our own eyes. When you said 'rural' to me several days ago, it meant one thing, when you say it to me now it means a different thing. We'll go back now with this renewed understanding of the challenges you face and give new thought to how we can merge the wonderful work that's taking place in this state with the intent that the president has, which is that every child in America deserves a quality education."

- U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige-
Visit to Alaska, May, 2003

The State of Alaska covers a geographic area approximately one-fifth the size of the contiguous United States. If laid over the lower 48 states, its territory would stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific, spanning the continent. Alaska differs not only in its size from the other states, but also in its demographics. Alaska's relatively small population, 634,892* has more than half of them – 327,363 people- clustered in the relatively small area of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Valley to the north. (*Alaska Department of Labor, Alaska Population Overview: 2001 Estimates) The rest of Alaska's citizenry is spread out over vast distances and rugged terrain.

Many Alaskans live in small, rural villages and towns that are not connected by any road system. They are dependent on such diverse means of travel as small ferries, infrequent jet and small aircraft services and snow machines. The cost of transportation is prohibitive, both in terms of price and time. For example, the three-hour round trip ticket from Anchorage to Barrow, about 850 air miles, costs $698 at a minimum. Small aircraft transport people from Anchorage to Kenai, a distance of 59 air miles, for $92 round trip, and from Anchorage to Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians is $820. Isolation is a real factor in Alaska, with distance and climate making it more dramatically so than in other states.

At the same time, the telecommunications revolution has helped to shrink the distance and isolation between students in urban and rural areas, between parents in villages and the cities, and between policy makers who represent the vastly diverse needs and interests of Alaskan citizens. It continues to offer opportunities for local economic development and broader educational opportunities. In order to participate in the global culture, students must know how to read and write well, and be able to use resources to further their own interests, the interests of their communities, and perhaps most importantly, the natural resource interests of this resource rich state. Many Alaskan children may not have traveled past the nearest small town or village but with growing access to global telecommunications and excellent reading and communication skills, they can become connected.

The daily realities of Alaskan life, including isolation, severe weather, limited transportation and technological dependency, add to the typical operational costs that any American school district may incur for the necessary and ongoing functions of

curriculum, instruction, assessment, student services and staff development. As a state, Alaska's challenges both environmentally and educationally are significant.

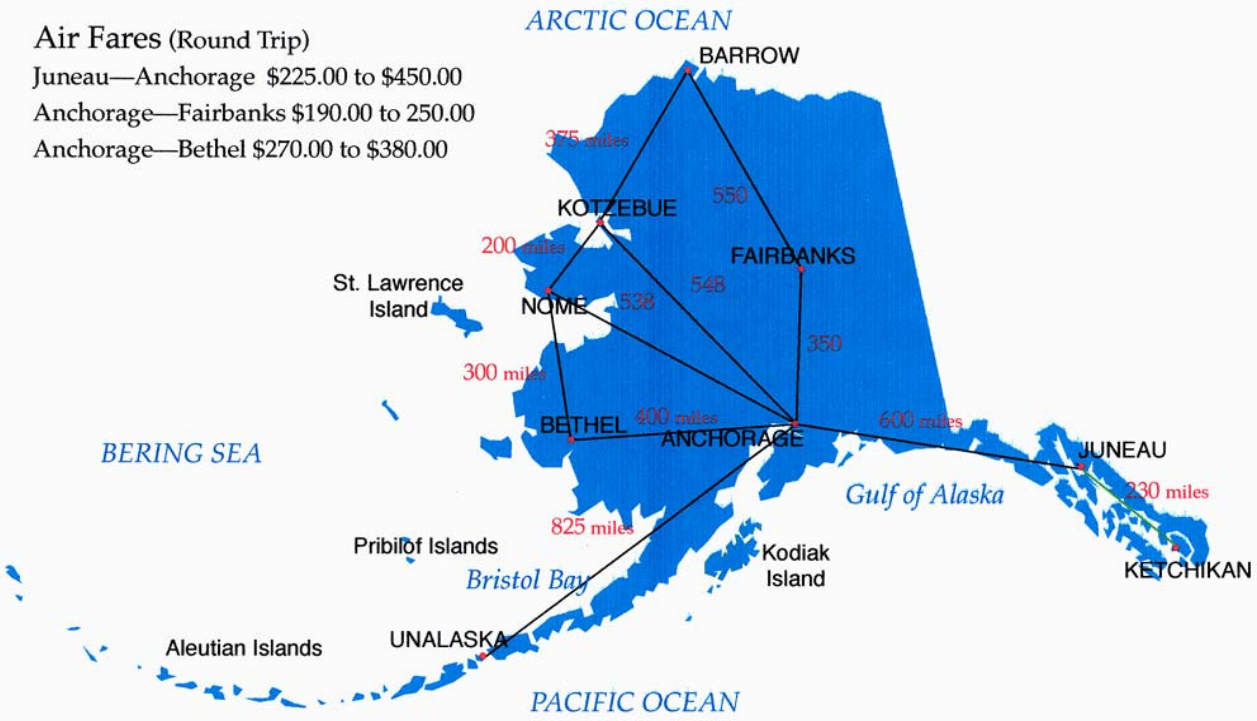
IMMENSITY OF ALASKA:

THE TOTAL LAND MASS OF ALASKA IS EQUAL TO 1/5 OF THE TOTAL

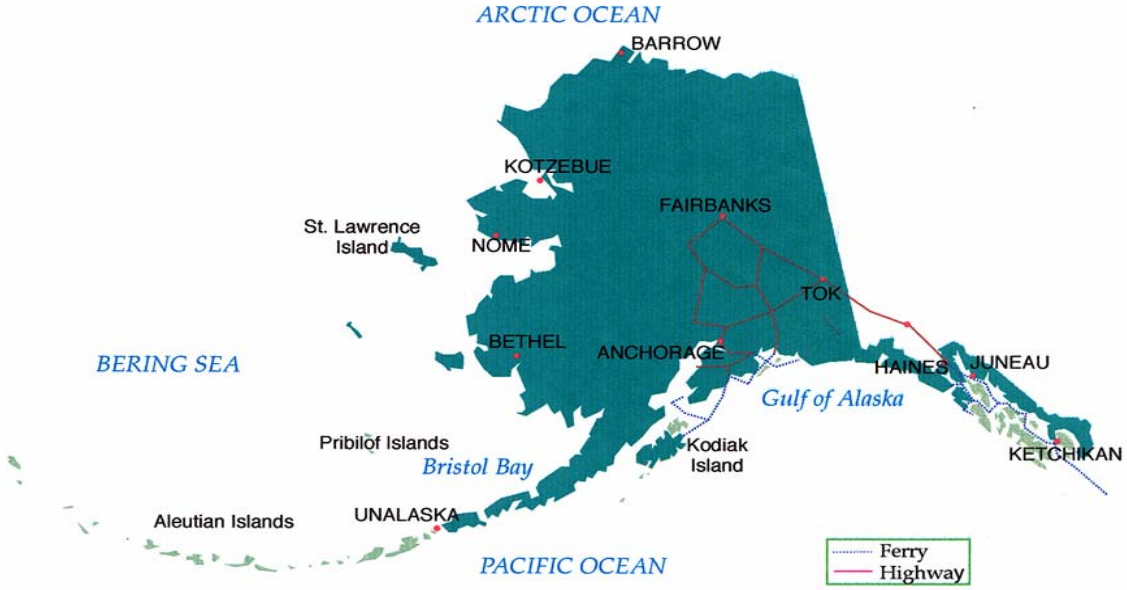
AREA OF THE UNITED STATES

AIR MILES

Air Fares (Round Trip)
Juneau—Anchorage $225.00 to $450.00
Anchorage—Fairbanks $190.00 to 250.00
Anchorage—Bethel $270.00 to $380.00



ROADS OF ALASKA



F.1 Comprehensive State Plan for Professional Development

This section presents the Alaska's Reading First Professional Development Plan that addresses theses unique challenges that builds on and promotes coordination among reading programs across the state. It includes a description of how K-3 teachers, including special education teachers, both in Reading First and non-Reading First schools, will receive 1) preparation in the essential components of reading; 2) information on scientifically based instructional strategies, programs, and materials; and 3) instruction in the use of screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional assessments

Overview of Current Reading Professional Development in Alaska

In Alaska there are a number of the current projects and organizations supporting reading development:

- **The University of Alaska** statewide developed a graduate Reading Endorsement Program in 1999-2000 with financial and human support from EED. In the process, University faculty learned more of the staff development and parent education needs across Alaska and pledged on-going collaboration.

- The **Alaska Regional Assistance Center (AKRAC) / Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC),** based in Juneau and Anchorage has been instrumental in developing Reading Success Networks throughout the state. These networks provide professional support for teachers of reading in the primary grades through such activities as helping with needs assessments, gathering data, preparing reports, helping coordinate in-school assistance services and providing professional development based on identified needs.

- The **Alaska State Literacy Association** is a major professional organization in the state, with a membership of over 500. Affiliated with the International Reading Association, the ASLA is over 30 years old, and has six active regional affiliates dedicated to increased professionalism. It helps develop new leadership by hosting an annual conference, providing small travel stipends to teachers, and working with Alaska's First Lady to award the Look to a Book annual grants to primary teachers.

- The **Read Alaska Project (REA)** includes the mandatory yearlong professional development course trough the University of Alaska Southeast; the development of teacher leaders through participation in the UA reading endorsement program and the yearlong continuation course. The Read Alaska provides an opportunity for Alaskan teachers to closely examine the scientifically based research and its relationship to pedagogy and assessment in reading, with the support and coaching necessary to effect substantive change in teaching practice.

- Other professional organizations in the state that are active players in the field of reading include the **Alaska School Librarians Association,** with a membership of over 100 members. Despite a decline in the number of school librarians, due to budget shortages, the organization is a notable advocate for lifelong reading. The **Alaska State Writing Consortium,** affiliated with the National Writing Project for the last twenty years, is the oldest statewide subject-area consortium and sponsors

summer institutes, regional and distance delivered writing courses and publications. It is responsible for initiating analytical writing assessment in the state, now a mainstay in most schools. The **Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children** is also an active participant at the local, regional and state level with a membership of an affiliate of NAEYC. Each of these organizations is represented on the Literacy Cadre, and acts as a resource to local, regional and statewide organizations, schools and parents.

- The **Anchorage Reads** project, the only America Reads direct grant in Alaska, is a partnership project involving Anchorage School District staff from the offices of Curriculum, Assessment and Evaluation, Title I, Indian Education, Bilingual Education and Migrant Education. They partnered with Community Education, School Business Partnerships, VISTA, Kid Corps Head Start, the University of Alaska and Alaska Pacific University departments of education and early childhood, Foster Grandparents, PTA, Big Brothers/Sisters, and the Anchorage Public Library. Together they support school-based training and tutoring in after school and evening community schools programs offered on site at neighborhood schools. Anchorage has over one third of the states' students within its attendance area, and nearly three times the number of students living in poverty as the next largest district in the state.

- **Title I** staff at EED has been working closely with the eligible School Improvement Sites, assisting them to develop school improvement plans and to become Schoolwide Programs, (all meet the 40% poverty threshold) and in the implementation of Comprehensive School Reform projects at eight sites. Title I also provides assistance to Title I School Improvement Sites in the form of grants for professional development activities, with a priority on early reading.

- **Title II Reading Professional Development grants** have been distributed to each district, based on student population. With a mutual emphasis on student achievement, and particularly reading achievement for primary grade students, the Title I and Title II projects coupled with Local Reading Improvement projects would greatly enhance the capabilities and the increase the achievement of children most in need of support.

Professional development providers across the state, such as the University of Alaska, have excellent reading training programs for teachers, but there is not a coordinated effort to provide a systematic, scientifically based researched reading (SBRR) instruction for all teachers and paraprofessionals. It is a fragmented approach with little or no follow-up with teachers once they are trained. As mentioned in A-2, Identified Gaps, this is the key issue, training teachers on SBRR programs, how to assess students and adjust instruction (use data to drive instruction) with continued coaching/support. In a state as sparsely populated as Alaska it is imperative that human resources and expertise are shared and coordinated, in order to increase literacy for all citizens. The Alaska Reading First program will provide this much needed coordination in order to provide seamless reading professional development for administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals across the state. Alaska Reading First will ensure the consistent use of scientifically based reading research as the foundation for all professional development including preservice training, continuing professional development and specialist training

F.2 Professional Development Structures

Our goal for professional development is to weave a coordinated, efficient, strong knit fabric of program delivery within the educational community as well as the community at large, at a time when there are many "loose threads". By eliciting the support and cooperation of the state literacy organizations for Alaska Reading First, we can make lasting inroads in the ways in which LEA's implement best practices in their primary classrooms.

Alaska's integrated system of professional development will be modeled after Oregon's Reading First project. All components of the professional development system will target three priorities: building statewide capacity; building school/ classroom capacity for SBRR; and maintaining capacity and developing independence. This should result in enhanced reading outcomes for all Alaska students, K-3.

Priority One: *Building state level capacity –Professional development of state QSTL's, other state specialists, content area specialist, and Reading Leadership Team*.
This priority involves building the capacity of the QSTL's and other personnel who work directly with schools on a variety of needs. This is an effort to coordinate state staff in other areas by making them cognizant of the Reading Excellence and Reading First programs. By coordinating our efforts and training QSTL staff in SBRR strategies, all of the state level staff will be better prepared to provide schools with comprehensive and coherent assistance in reading instruction. Part of this capacity building will be the identification of eligible SBRR professional development providers across the state through the Reading First SBRR professional development application process. This priority is critical, as Alaska does not have the funding to hire a large SBRR team nor a large pool of SBRR candidates to draw from. Having QSTL's attending the BRI's, providing specific SBRR training through the REA consultants, Dr. Marcy Stein and Dr. David Chard, will assist Reading First in building this state level capacity to support SBRR programs across the state.

Priority Two: *Building school/classroom capacity-continuous professional development of K-3 teachers, instructional specialist, paraprofessionals, and school administrators.*
Designed around a schoolwide model of professional development, this priority involves all K-3 teachers, instructional specialist (i.e., special education, title I) paraprofessionals and school principals participating in three state sponsored Beginning Reading Institutes as outlined below:
(See Appendix VIII for draft timeline and proposed content)

Institute I: A three-day institute conducted in the early fall to develop conceptual understanding of scientifically based programs and practices. *

Institute II: A two-day late fall follow-up to review student performance data and design schoolwide reading programs and interventions.

Institute III: A two-day follow-up in spring to evaluate student performance and adjust instruction as needed. A review of the annual student data and schoolwide reading programs will also occur.

**All Institute dates are pending the approval of the Alaska Reading First application. Timeline in appendix VIII provides an update time frame for these institutes.*

Priority Three: *Maintaining capacity and developing independence of Alaska's schools to ensure all children are readers by the end of third grade.*
A schoolwide professional development model will be maintained in the second year of to promote maintenance of effective SBRR practice and develop independence. The three institutes will be offered each year to account for staff turnover and to provide ongoing technical assistance. Alaska is currently pursuing a partnership with the state of Washington and Oregon in implementing the "READING LINKS" distance delivered reading professional development course that the Washington REA program is developing. This will provide mentors with a framework for monthly professional development sessions with schools individually and to review progress and revise instructional programs.

In order to achieve these priorities, Alaska Reading First funds will be utilized to create these Beginning Reading Institutes. EED will award, through a competitive request for proposals, a contract to create the BRI. These institutes will be a partnership between the contracting agency and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED). This organization will coordinate the professional development series called Reading First, Beginning Reading Institutes (BRIs) that is **mandatory for all K-3 teachers in Reading First Schools and district K-12 Special Education staff.** Again, these institutes will be modeled after Oregon's Institutes of Beginning Reading. BRI's will be conducted by professional development consultants such as Dr. Roland Good, of the University of Oregon, Dr. Anita Archer, and Dr. Louisa Moats. In addition to these national consultants, the Reading First State Director, the state Reading Leadership Team, and experienced Alaska reading teachers / mentors will play an active role in the institutes. Key to the success of these institutes is the inclusion of experienced Alaska reading teachers, as they will provide training on effective SBR reading strategies that are successful for Alaska's unique population.

At the school level, the school reading team, the principal along with the schools designated reading coordinators/mentors and any other staff members that the schools designate, will be responsible for helping the school implement the action plans developed at the Beginning Reading Institutes.

The Reading First Director will also coordinate with the University of Alaska, Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), and other identified professional development providers in order to provide coordinated statewide reading professional development. This coordination will entail the Alaska Reading First program identifying and approving SBRR professional development. Modeled after the Title I Supplemental Educational Services application, professional development providers across the state, such as the University of Alaska and Alaska Pacific University, will apply to become eligible Reading First SBRR professional development providers. A team of SBRR trained personnel will be identified to review these applications. The application, review criteria, and training will be completed in November of 2003 with the assistance of Dr. Marcy Stein of the University of Washington, and Dr. David Chard of the University of Oregon. This will ensure that all Reading First funded professional development is based an SBRR. The purpose of this SBRR application process is to assist Alaska in meeting the requirements of Reading First, Sec. 1202 Uses of Funds, (d) (3) (B) which states:

"(3) PROFESSIONAL INSERVICE AND PRESERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW- A State educational agency may expend not more than 65 percent of the amount of the funds made available under paragraph (1) —

to strengthen and enhance preservice courses for students preparing, at all public institutions of higher education in the State, to teach kindergarten through grade 3 by —

(i) reviewing such courses to determine whether the courses' content is consistent with the findings of the most current scientifically based reading research, including findings on the essential components of reading instruction;

(ii) following up such reviews with recommendations to ensure that such institutions offer courses that meet the highest standards; and

(iii) preparing a report on the results of such reviews, submitting the report to the reading and literacy partnership for the State established under section 1203(d), and making the report available for public review by means of the Internet;"

For example: if an LEA wants to use federal funds for reading professional development, such as offered by institutes of higher education, the course and provider must be on the approved list. This will provide a mechanism in which to strengthen and enhance SBRR teacher preparation across the state and meet the Reading First requirements as outlined in Sec. 1202.

This application process will also assist other federal program managers, such as Title I and Title II, in approving federally funded reading professional development activities that are based on SBRR. The Director and QSTL's will act as a clearinghouse that provides ongoing technical assistance and provides a list of approved SBRR professional development providers/courses to all schools implementing SBRR K-3 programs.

High Quality Professional Development

Quality professional development lays the foundation for the successful implementation of the Reading First program. When professional development is of high quality it can be an effective way to help teachers develop and strengthen their teaching skills and promote positive lasting change in teaching practices (Huberman & Miles, 1984). Research has consistently demonstrated that a key variable in successful outcomes for children is quality implementation (Baker & Smith, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). When teachers implement any type of structured curriculum program, regardless of how well constructed it is, implementation quality varies and student outcomes are affected (Kinder, Gersten, & Kelly, 1989). Even when the highest standards of professional development are used, variation in implementation will occur (Gersten, Baker, & Lloyd, 2000), as will the degree to which teachers sustain their use of effective practices over time (Kennedy, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The way to address this inevitable pattern and ensure that implementation quality has the chance to be as strong as possible among all the teachers in Reading First classrooms is to make sure professional development is intense and relies on sound principles of effective classroom change. One of the major responsibilities of Reading First schools will be to develop the substantial capacity necessary to carry on the continuous improvement of beginning

reading instructional practices throughout their participation in the Reading First project, but most importantly, to continue to improve reading outcomes for students after the formal conclusion of project activities. Of course, building teachers will be essential in making sure that reading improvements are sustained over time. But it will also be essential that key leadership positions also play a major role in sustainability. Building principals will certainly play a key role in this regard. However, the turnover for building principals is also quite high. Consequently, other leadership positions must be identified that will be able to help schools build the capacity for sustaining effective changes in reading instruction. BRI will support Reading First coordinators and their teams as they assume key leadership roles in sustaining effective change. In this context, one of their tasks will be to help schools establish necessary structures for sustainability. BRI Professional development efforts will help coordinators with this task.

Effective communities exist at many different levels including within a school department, at schoolwide or district levels, or at state, regional, or national levels (McLaughlin, 1994). We view a critical role of BRI is to find ways to encourage and foster the establishment of a professional community among Reading First teachers, mentor coaches, and other Reading First personnel. We view this as essential because of the impact it could have on long –term sustainability. The professional development knowledge base has increasingly emphasized the importance of collegial networks for the sustained use of research-based practices. Little (1993) cited several benefits including developing "a norm of informed and steady experimentation" in teaching (i.e., opportunities to experiment with new techniques, evaluate their impact, and then refine instruction based on student data). Little also described how collegial networks can increase teacher capacity by allowing teams of teachers to capitalize on joint expertise. In other words, those with high skill or interest in vocabulary instruction can frequently share their knowledge with peers in a more collegial, practical, and useful manner than might be achieved through a brief visit from an outside consultant. Mentor coaches, Reading First coordinators, and the Reading First Center will work together to help develop an atmosphere among teachers at Reading First schools that encourages collaboration, problem solving, and the growth of teacher professional networks.

McLaughlin (1994) reported that many teachers feel particularly fatigued by, and unable to accommodate, the most challenging students in their classrooms. She noted, however, that one factor that distinguished teachers who felt overwhelmed by challenging students from teachers who felt they could meet the needs of challenging students was "membership in some strong professional community" (p. 33). Professional communities seem to provide teachers with an avenue of professional development that is different from traditional professional development. Because of the importance in Reading First on meeting the reading instructional needs of all students, it is particularly critical that professional development efforts through BRI recognize the important role teacher collaborative structures play in improving and sustaining effective practice

In order to ensure High Quality Professional Development within Alaska, Dr. Shirley Holloway, Commissioner of the Alaska Department Education and Early Development, has created a Professional Development standards advisory committee.

"*New information tells us that professional development done well and incorporating collaboration and careful regard to research can be a powerful engine for school*

improvement and change. Additionally, the No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA) recognizes the critical nature of professional development as a vehicle for improving student achievement. Alaskans committed to quality education are writing professional development standards in order to establish a framework that will help improve teaching and learning in our state. The aim is to give language to what constitutes quality professional development from an Alaskan perspective and to provide indicators that will serve as a gauge for practitioners. Alaskans committed to quality education need to generate an understanding and appreciation of professional development as a critical component of a school system that meets the needs of students and the broader community. The standards are a valuable tool for planning, executing, and assessing professional development. The standards are a goal that apply to all schools statewide and when reached, will improve teacher and school performance."

"Quality professional development derives its power and validity from the local learning community. The learning community includes students, parents, educators and community members. All Alaskan communities must be provided resources to meet the unique professional development needs within their schools. All Alaskan schools can be charted along a continuum of professional development. One of the goals of these standards is to help move all our schools further along this continuum."

- Former Commissioner Holloway.

This committee has proposed Alaska Professional Standards that utilized the standards created by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) as a starting point. The committee followed the format established by NSDC of context, process and content standards, and the committee then crafted standards and indicators pertinent to the Alaskan context. These Professional Development Standards go before the Alaska State Board of Education for adoption in January 2003 (Appendix II).

The development of BRI would build upon these professional development standards and focus professional development on SBRR programs and implementation. The BRI professional development structure would promote coordination based on standards among reading programs in the state. The implementation of the Reading First identified SBRR professional development providers' application will ensure that these standards are being met and that all reading professional development across the state is done in a coordinated effort. EED would also promote the repositioning of Title I, Title II federal funds and Quality School/Learning Opportunity state grants by LEA's to support their reading professional development efforts.

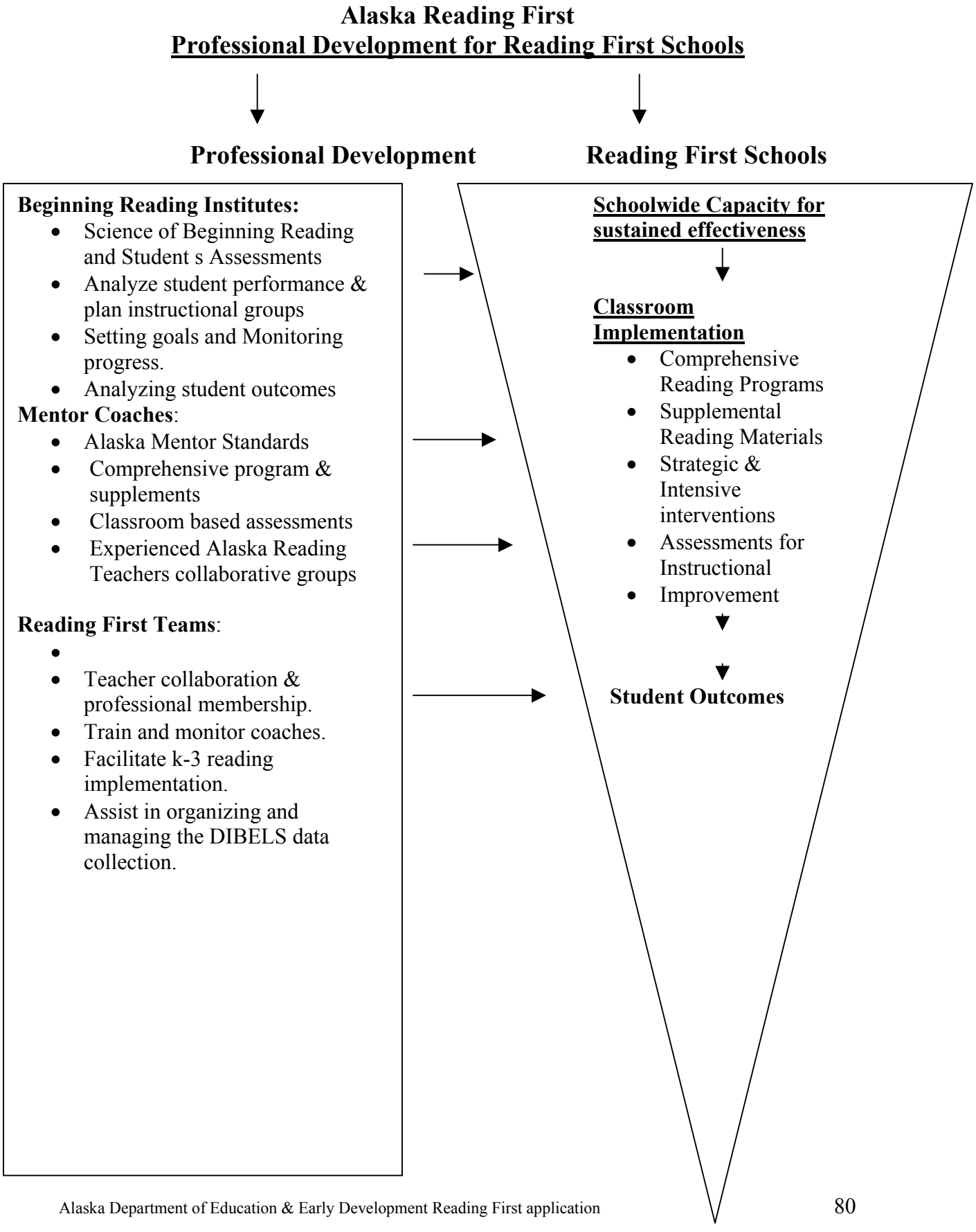
Beginning Reading Institutes (Appendix VIII)

BRI's will focus on the "Five Big Ideas" (http://reading.uoregon.edu/index.php) in scientifically based beginning reading instruction, and how to select a scientifically based reading program and supplementary materials to meet the needs of 100% of students. The institutes will also address how to implement classroom assessments—administering assessments, reporting, analyzing, and using data to inform instruction; how to implement flexible, small grouping practices to meet particular instructional needs; how to secure at least ninety protected minutes daily for reading instruction; and focus on the training and coordination of mentor coaches. BRI will establish and strengthen this network of

professional development reading communities and utilize the expertise of current Alaska practicing teachers who has demonstrated SBR reading results with students.

The challenges involved in transforming reading instruction in Reading First schools require a comprehensive, multidimensional focus. An integrated system of professional development, as portrayed in Figure 1,will be used to improve the capacity of Reading First schools to deliver and sustain schoolwide improvement and effective classroom implementation of reading instruction. All components of the professional development system will target these two priorities: schoolwide capacity and classroom implementation. Together, a schoolwide focus on beginning reading and classroom implementation should result in enhanced reading outcomes for all students, K-3.

Figure 1. Alaska Reading First:
Professional Development for Reading First Schools



F.3 Issues in Ongoing Professional Development for Teachers

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has outlined three aspects of professional development that focus on raising the performance levels of teachers and students. We will use this framework in our professional development model and the Alaska Professional Development Standards.

Context. The context of professional development helps provide an understanding of how effective change takes place. One underlying principle is that it is necessary for everyone involved in the change process (in this case the implementation of Reading First) to be involved in that process. It is also important that the involvement of participants be active. Rather than merely attending an in service, for example, and perhaps having a vague notion of "trying something out in the classroom," it is necessary that teachers, administrators, and mentor coaches be active participants in the professional development process throughout its duration. Professional development should not be something that happens to them; it is something they should be intimately involved in developing and constructing from beginning to end. For active, persistent involvement on the part of participants to work it is important that professional development expectations be clear and consistent. In Reading First, professional development goals will be clearly articulated and sequenced and linked to student reading outcomes.

Another important context variable is that time and resources necessary to accomplish professional development objectives should be allocated. Reading First professional development activities will occur over two years and be staggered over the course of each year so that teachers and other participants will have the time they need to learn and apply new knowledge. The resources necessary to target professional development from a number of integrated sources will be allocated so that teachers will have the intensity of training they need to effectively change the way they teach beginning reading. Teachers will also have time for coaching debriefings; roving substitutes funded through Reading First will enable teachers to meet with mentor coaches the afternoon of the coaching session.

Finally, professional development should be structured not only in recognition that teachers will learn from formal professional development structures, but also to reflect the fact that teachers will learn a substantial amount from each other away from the microscope of formal activities. We have indicated our support for this learning dimension by prioritizing the development of close collaborative relationships among teachers as a critical professional development goal. The school-based Reading First team will plan time each week for this to occur.

Content. The content of professional development will focus on the underlying theoretical support for beginning reading instructional practices and how to translate that knowledge effectively in the context of real classroom environments. The five essential instructional components (phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension) provide a clear content foundation, and the assessment system offers a valid way to determine what progress students are making toward achieving key reading outcomes. Instructional priorities will be clearly articulated for students who are making adequate progress, as well as a framework of providing research-based interventions for those students whose progress is not sufficient.

Processes. The charge to fundamentally and dramatically change the way reading is taught in K-3 requires a professional development process that is aligned with the immensity of the Reading First task. Professional development structures must take into account that teachers and other Reading First personnel are being asked to learn a great deal and change a great deal about how children are taught to read in their schools. Reading First goals will not be accomplished all at once, of course, and need to reflect the fact that learning occurs in stages and that teachers will be at different stages of knowledge, development, and application during the professional development experience. For example, as professionals, teachers progress through a series of stages as they develop from newcomers fresh out of pre-service programs to seasoned veterans with multiple years of experience in the classroom (Huberman, 1995). Recognizing the influence of teacher experience and teacher characteristics is essential in understanding how teachers will approach new expectations associated with Reading First. This understanding can be used to positively influence the nature of teacher professional development in the context of Reading First.

Part G Integration of Reading First Activities with REA Activities

In August 2001, Alaska was awarded an REA grant. Twenty-five schools from eight districts were awarded funds for the Alaska Reading Excellence Act Program, "Read Alaska" in July of 2002. Northwest Regional Educational Lab (NWREL) is just beginning to design the evaluation of Read Alaska. REA will fund sites for two years, ending in August of 2004.

Several of the many key components of the Read Alaska projected included:

- Providing LEA's with a list of approved SBRR programs.
- Assurance that each LEA hired a Reading Specialist to assist REA sites.
- Assurance that each site had a lead person who coordinated with the LEA reading Specialist.
- Assurance that all k-3 staff participate in state sponsored reading professional development

Lessons learned form the REA "Read Alaska" program:

1) Ensuring LEA support and site buy-in is critical. Read Alaska moved thoughtfully during its first year to ensure LEA and site readiness, thus delaying the awards by one year.

Implications for Reading First: a clear process for identifying LEA and site readiness has been established. The use of the school readiness form and a clear step by step program readiness plan (see D-1, Schools to be served) will ensure Reading First funds are: 1) released in a more timely manner, and; 2) only sites that have a clear reading improvement plan will receive funds.

2) The design and implementation of the REA professional development strands has been a costly and time consuming project that does not build upon existing SBRR professional development across the state.

I*mplications for Reading First:* With the creation of the Beginning Reading Institutes will insure reading professional development that is more precise and closely aligned with current SBRR.

3) The assessment system proposed under Read Alaska, the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), was not used by any LEA in the state. Again, REA did not build upon what existed in the state. Implementing this assessment system was going to be costly and the training was going to be very time consuming. The DIBELS and the DRA were the two most widely used assessment systems used in Alaska. As a result, the Read Alaska project adopted these two measures for data collection in the REA sites.

Implications for Reading First: Reading First puts the focus on one, clear assessment system as outlined on page 119. This builds upon existing expertise in our state and provides a clear and common source of data in which to evaluate reading programs effectiveness.

4) REA funds one Education Specialist position at EED. This limits the states capacity to provide all REA sites with timely SBRR professional development and technical assistance.

Implications for Reading First: With the creation of BRI, the state will increase its capacity to provide SBRR professional development and technical assistance that is more cost effective and timely. Reading First funds provides a more focused SBRR support system and prevents the "layering on" effect. Reading First is the binding strand that will ensure that coordinated, effective SBRR programs are implemented across the state.

Section 2: State Leadership and Management

The SEA's application describes the State's plan for providing coherent leadership by 1) providing targeted LEAs and schools that receive Reading First sub grants with technical assistance in implementing strategies to improve reading instruction that are based on scientifically based reading research, and 2) building a statewide Reading Leadership Team to coordinate State efforts to improve reading instruction, and with a leadership capability that approves and monitors the underlying scientific basis of the instruction implemented by targeted districts and schools. The application must also demonstrate a feasible plan to effectively manage the State's Reading First program. The application must specifically address the following:

2A. State Technical Assistance Plan—How will the SEA provide technical assistance to LEAs and schools participating in Reading First? How will the SEA monitor the progress of participating LEAs and schools?

Alaska has established a strong policy foundation for reading achievement by focusing on student standards, educator standards, school standards, and program standards. The expectations and goals are clearly stated and they are increasingly used as the foundation for teaching and learning in Alaska. To ensure that district leaders and school principals have access to technical assistance and support from the state, EED has assigned a Quality School Team leader (QSTL) to each of the LEAs. QSTL's are comprised of 25

Education Specialists at EED (see Appendix III for district assignments and qualifications). The QSTL is responsive to the LEAs' requests for assistance and resources. The QSTL will be required to contact the Reading First LEAs on a regular basis to monitor progress and to keep LEAs appraised of technical assistance opportunities and other resources that might be helpful to their Reading First schools. Providing SBRR professional development for the QSTL's is a top priority for the state of Alaska (as indicated on Page 74)

Operational leadership of the Alaska Technical Assistance Plan for Alaska Reading First begins with the Director of Reading First. Reading First funds will contribute to the support of this position throughout the duration of the Reading First program. Figure 2 shows that the Director of Alaska Reading First will serve as Chair of the Reading First Leadership Team and collaborate directly with the Reading First Leadership Team and the BRI contractor on how to enhance the state's capacity to provide high quality reading programs to all K-3 students in Reading First schools. The Director will work closely with the Reading First Leadership Team to communicate the results of Reading First throughout the state: among the highest levels of state's legislative body, to the public, and throughout Alaska's system of public education. Critical in the relationship between the Director of Reading First and the Reading First Leadership Team will be efforts to expand the scientific basis of reading research to all of Alaska's elementary schools. The state legislature will need accurate information on the progress of Reading First districts and schools so that fiscal decisions about adequately funding the expansion of reading goals and objectives throughout the state can be justified, established, and maintained.

The relationship between the Director of Alaska Reading First and the BRI contractor, and the three central functions of technical assistance provided by the BRI, is the primary structure of the Alaska Technical Assistance Plan. These three functions are: (a) Professional Development, (b) Assessment, Data analysis, evaluation (c) Technology and Dissemination of SBRR information and program sustainability.

The Director of Reading First will be responsible for managing the overall Reading First program throughout the state. One of the major responsibilities in that regard will be to work with the BRI contractor to ensure that the three technical assistance functions of Alaska Reading First have the resources they need, and are providing the necessary direct and indirect services to Reading First schools. The Director of Reading First will have to know the responsibilities of each of the separate functions, and understand how they should interact together to successfully provide the services Reading First schools and districts need. It will be important, for example, that services provided by each of the functions not be duplicated or in conflict with one another. In other words, if the evaluation element is providing information to a school on the use of a particular screening measure, it will be important that the Technology and Dissemination unit understands what information is being provided and why.

Two formal procedures will be put in place to ensure that the Director communicates directly with the BRI contractor and each of the three functions of the Alaska Technical Assistance Plan, and is able to foster effective communication and planning among them. First, the BRI contractor will meet quarterly with the Director of Reading First to evaluate progress and finalize plans for the subsequent quarter. Second, the Director of Reading First and the BRI contractor will meet quarterly with the key personnel from

each of the technical assistance functions and LEA Coordinators to evaluate progress of Alaska Reading First and plan for the continued coordination of the technical assistance functions.

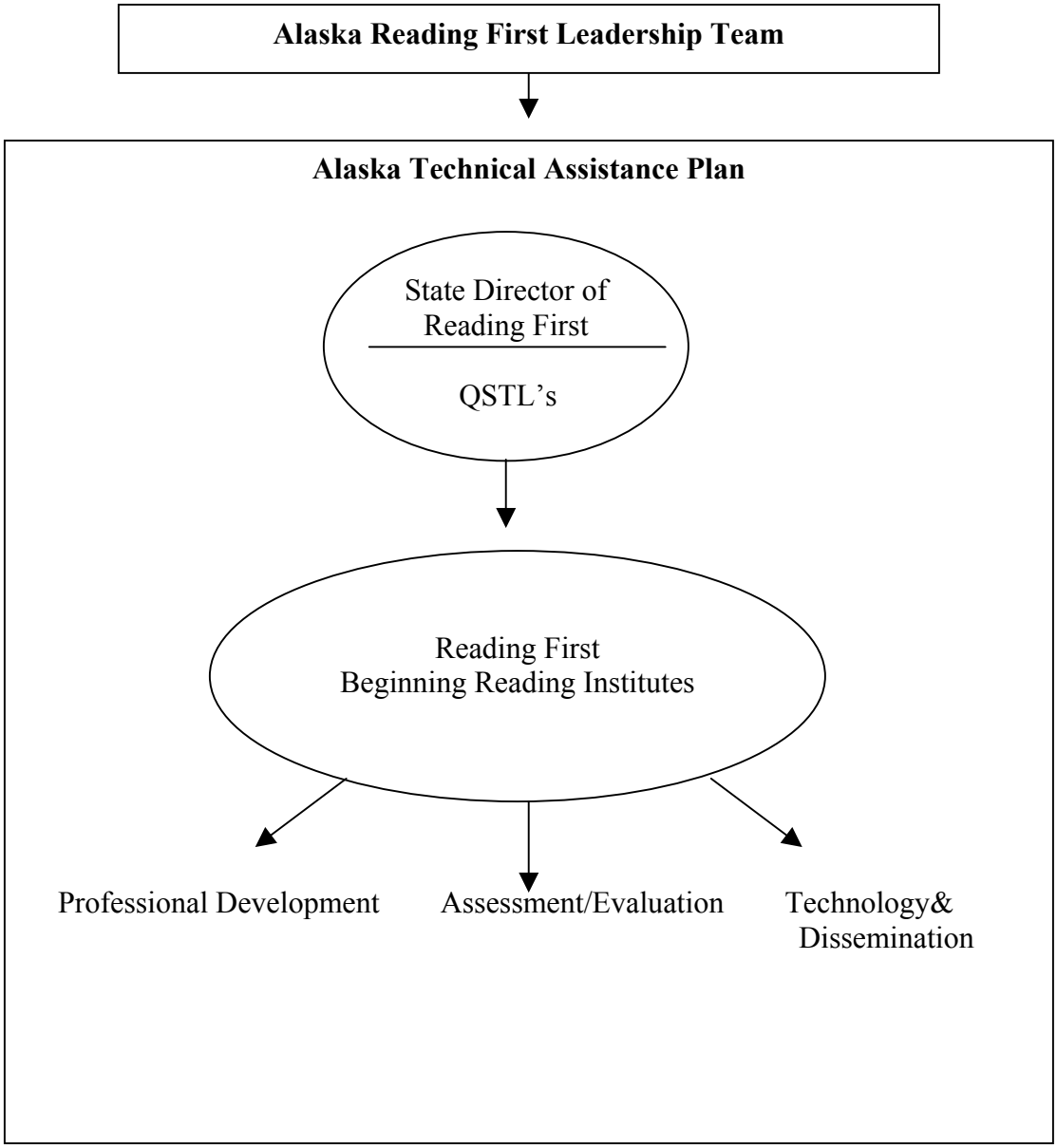
The eventual goal for Alaska is that Alaska Reading First schools will be models of scientifically based reading research into practice. The Director of Alaska Reading First will have the major responsibility for ensuring that progress toward this goal is maintained during Alaska Reading First, and that each of the technical assistance elements is able to provide the necessary support that Reading First schools need to initiate and sustain this transformation.

A.1 Structure: Beginning Reading Institutes (Appendix VIII)

To streamline parallel efforts and access a substantial reading resource in the state of Alaska EED will award, through a competitive request for proposals, a contract to create the Beginning Reading Institutes. BRI will be the structure through which EED will improve reading instruction throughout the state four ways: First, the BRI provides a mechanism through which EED will be able to provide ongoing professional development to districts, schools, and teachers throughout the state of Alaska; Second, BRI provides a mechanism for evaluating efforts by the state, districts, schools, and classrooms to improve reading instruction and outcomes for students throughout the state. Third, BRI builds collaboration and communication across agencies in support of SBRR programs and professional development. Finally, BRI offers a mechanism for developing further proposals to study beginning reading using the highest standards of scientific rigor.

The two major responsibilities of the BRI is to (a) coordinate three functions of technical assistance provided to Reading First schools, and (b) collaborate with the Director of Reading First and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) in responding to future reading initiatives, grants, and contracts. The three primary functions of technical assistance provided through the BRI are to provide: (a) Professional Development, (b) Assessment, Data analysis, evaluation, and; (c) Technology and Dissemination of SBRR information. throughout the state (see Figure 2, this section). The focus of these collaborative efforts will involve three main activities

Figure 2: Alaska Technical Assistance plan



Professional Development

The Beginning Reading Institutes will (a) provide direct service to Reading First schools and Reading First leadership personnel, (b) provide a framework the additional professional development structures will be used in working to meet the technical assistance needs of Reading First districts, schools, and classrooms, (c) develop structures and procedures to be used for leaders to support capacity building and sustainability, and establishing procedures to continuously improve implementation quality and student outcomes, (d) help schools develop comprehensive plans for student assessments that are implemented with integrity and assist facilitation of the use of the data for instructional decision making (assessment training), (e) training and assisting classroom mentor coaches. All activities will be in alignment with the Alaska Professional Development Standards.

Assessment / Evaluation
The Reading First Director, QSTL's, and the BRI contractor will assist NWREL (section 3) in the evaluation of (a) the functions of technical assistance provided to districts and schools for the Reading First implementation, and (b) the performance of Reading First schools in terms of classroom implementation of scientifically based reading instruction, and student reading outcomes. Of primary importance in the evaluation will be student reading growth and outcomes on key components of effective reading. The evaluation will seek to identify key variables that are responsible for changes in student reading performance, such as the knowledge teachers acquire about early reading development and instruction, and how teachers act on that knowledge during day-to-day classroom instruction. In fact, we hypothesize that these two variables—teacher knowledge and classroom practice—will turn out to be particularly crucial components of successfully increasing student reading outcomes in K-3.

A.2 Technology and Dissemination

The Technology and Dissemination of information is the final component of the Alaska Technical Assistance Plan. This role is to organize and disseminate information on the other technical assistance elements. There will be two primary goals of the Technology and Dissemination plan: First, will be accessibility of information contained within three interconnected websites: Big Ideas in Beginning Reading, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, and Alaska Reading First. A second function of the Technology and Dissemination plan will be to disseminate information and materials to districts, schools, and classrooms. A major purpose of this dissemination effort is best described broadly as extended learning opportunities.
Websites. Two of the three websites that will be central sources of information for Reading First districts, schools, and classrooms are built and active. Big Ideas in Beginning Reading and DIBELS web are currently maintained independently of Reading First and the Alaska Technical Assistance Plan. The third, Alaska Reading First, will be developed specifically for Reading First districts, schools, and classrooms in Alaska.

The Big Ideas in Beginning Reading site describes the five instructional components of beginning reading ("big ideas" http://reading.uoregon.edu/index.php) identified by the National Reading Panel and the Reading First Legislation, and how to teach and assess those skills. The opening screen of the site provides a clear indication of the close link between the site and the major components of Reading First. In addition to the alignment between the big ideas and the essential instructional components of Reading First, the other major dimensions of the site are aligned with goals of Reading First. The assessment area addresses different purposes of assessments including screening assessments, progress monitoring assessments, diagnostic assessments, and outcome assessments. The use of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is demonstrated and discussed as a way to assess phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency. The Beginning Reading website also has a clear link to the DIBELS website that provides a full treatment of the DIBELS assessment approach.

The Beginning Reading site also includes information on putting a research-based beginning reading model in place at a school. The ideas presented in this part of the site correspond closely to the content of the BRIs.

The DIBELS site discusses the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, a

set of standardized, individually administered measures of early reading development. The site explains the measures and provides technical data and research information. The site also offers the ability to download the measures for use at no cost. The DIBELS website also includes a DIBELS Data System, a tool that allows schools to enter DIBELS data online and generate automated reports. This data system is provided to every teacher and includes data analysis for every K-3 student in Alaska for an estimated $1 per student, per year.

The Alaska Reading First website will be new. It will contain information about Reading First, and descriptions of how Reading First is being implemented in Alaska, as well as links to other Reading First Sites. The site will have instructional modules on different topics (e.g., fluency-building) pertinent to Reading First schools, and information about specific assessments and curricula. The site will also be used for dissemination of announcements and materials, and will include a bulletin board message system for participants to ask and answer questions.

Extended Learning Opportunities. Alaska is a large and a predominantly rural state. Making sure schools are connected to the internet and other schools in Alaska is an important feature of electronic dissemination. It does little, however, to address ways in which technology might be used to help create more interactive learning environments at Reading First schools and other Reading First sites. A major purpose of the Technology and Dissemination function will be to set up extended learning opportunities at Reading First school sites. To address in a substantive way issues related to Reading First goals and objectives, learning opportunities will be interactive and will include participants from different regions of the state during commonly scheduled, in-person sessions.

We expect the Technology and Dissemination function to play an active role in facilitating the types of extended learning opportunities that characterize schools and district-based inservices, teacher study groups, and other more tutorial types of training sessions. For example, a schoolwide inservice might be developed as a follow-up on an BRI focusing on a specific comprehensive reading program. Different schools using that particular reading program, as well as a facilitator from the BRI or the Director of Reading First, would work closely to set up this type of inservice. In some cases the inservice might be primarily didactic; in other cases it might be highly interactive. The nature and format would be dictated by inservice goals, not by logistical issues related to distance and location.

Another example would be to hold regularly scheduled Reading First team meetings, where teachers at a particular Reading First school might work with someone in another school or another group of teachers at a Reading First School on a sequenced series of learning activities related to particular topic. For instance, a school might want to set up a series of strategic and intensive interventions with students in K-3 following the fall screening assessments. Teachers might meet once or twice a week for a month to plan and implement a variety of approaches and receive ongoing feedback on their efforts. Or, teacher study groups might be set up with a partner school to have ongoing discussions on specific conceptual issues related to beginning reading. Teachers could have assigned readings or data collection during the week and Technology and Dissemination function would help set up interactive discussions among one or more schools related to those activities.

In other cases, videotaped examples or Internet based programs of beginning reading instruction, such as the "READING LINKS" (page 48) project, might serve as a stimulus for groups of teachers, mentor coaches, and EED staff to analyze critical features of beginning reading instruction. These lessons could be sequenced to match what teachers are currently focusing on in the classroom so that in between weekly meetings, teachers could work on implementation tasks with their own students. They could report on these efforts at the next meeting; and when the group was cohesive enough, the Technology and Dissemination function could assist in videotaping teachers' implementation efforts for presentation at the weekly meetings. All online courses will be approved as part of the Reading First SBRR professional development application.

In some cases, teacher study groups might take on a more tutorial flavor. For instance, there are many "steps" involved in the assessment system schools will learn at the BRIs. QSTL's and mentor coaches might regularly work with specific schools to make sure the steps are implemented and also engage in long-distance discussions with teachers as they complete specific steps to make sure they understand the underlying rationale. This pace of implementation would give teachers the time they need to process complex information, and get specific feedback on their efforts to achieve high quality implementation.

A.3 Monitoring Progress of Students in Reading First Schools

Throughout Alaska Reading First, the Alaska Technical Assistance Plan will also play a key role in monitoring the progress Reading First schools make in improving their beginning reading programs. One of the most significant ways progress will be monitored is also one of the most efficient. All Reading First schools will administer and use DIBELS to monitor the reading progress of all students at least three times per year. The data will be entered and analyzed using the DIBELS web-based system that will be coordinated by the director and the Northwest Regional Educational Lab. NWREL will create an analysis package and reporting format that district and schools can use to improve their instructional programs for students. The state will also use this reporting format to determine the success and difficulties Reading First schools are having.

Not only will this analysis of information provide a general way to determine how well children are doing on Reading First assessments, but it will also allow the professional development and evaluation component to analyze how individual schools identify students for strategic and intensive interventions, as well as determine the effectiveness of their intervention efforts. An example can help illustrate this point. The DIBELS system includes a printout at the individual classroom level suggesting categories of instructional service that each student should receive based on the assessment results. For students who do very poorly on the DIBELS measures, for instance, the recommendation is that an intensive intervention should be implemented. The printout does not specify the nature of the intervention. That decision would be made on the basis of diagnostic assessments along with the professional judgment of the classroom teacher and other members of the decision making team.

The point is that the school, the building administrator, and classroom teacher would be clearly alerted to the potential reading difficulties for every student in K-3. In many cases, the data will suggest that the core reading program is working effectively; in other

cases, the data will suggest that students are struggling and should be provided with some type of instructional intervention. Because this information will be part of the web-based analysis system, the state has a built-in mechanism for monitoring how effectively schools and classrooms are responding to individual students. Of course, the state would need additional information to determine if an intervention was actually implemented, and if so, how it was constructed and implemented. Once that information was determined, the student's progress could be monitored in the context of the intervention designed to boost reading performance.

The evaluation component of Reading First will assist schools and districts to monitor the effectiveness of their Reading First programs by providing timely reports to principals and district level leaders. The reports are based on the common set of progress monitoring and outcome assessments that will be required in all Reading First schools. These reports will assist local school leaders to identify classrooms and schools that are achieving exemplary outcomes as well as those that may be in need of further support and training to achieve desired outcomes. The unique value of the evaluation component is that the process allows teachers, principals, and district level teachers to examine their own progress in relation to the progress of other schools that serve populations of children who enter K-3 classrooms with similar demographic and achievement characteristics. Broad participation in this evaluation process will establish a normative expectation for appropriate early assessments as an established component of effective reading programs.

2B. Building Statewide Infrastructure—How will the SEA use Reading First to build statewide commitment to improving K-3 reading instruction and raising K-3 reading achievement? What leadership at the SEA will be dedicated to Reading First? Has the State established a Reading Leadership Team?

B.1 Commitment to Improving K-3 Reading Instruction and Achievement

Governor Knowles, in conjunction with the legislature, EED, and the State Board of Education, launched the Quality Schools Initiative, and subsequently led the nation in hosting the first Education Summit, supported by the business community, to announce that Initiative. Alaska's Quality Schools Initiative, which now serves as the framework for education in the state, calls for high student academic standards and assessment; family, school, business and community support for safe, healthy schools; quality professional development; and school excellence standards.

The Alaska State Legislature passed legislation in 1997 and 1998 that mandated the creation and administration of a high school graduation qualifying examination along with three other Benchmark assessments, at grades 3, 6, and 8 and a Developmental Profile of Kindergartners. These examinations, based on the state's reading, writing, and mathematics performance standards, are now administered annually with the first assessment occurring in March 2000. In School year 2002-2003, the Terra Nova assessment will be administered in grades 4,5,7, and 9, making Alaska one of the first states to implement a comprehensive 3-12 statewide assessment system. In conjunction with these assessments is the development of unique student identification numbers. Every student in Alaska is assigned a unique number and their assessment scores can now be tracked and follow the student throughout the state. These assessments and unique identifier numbers provide data for LEA's to determine if students are meeting the State

Board of Education approved reading performance standards *(Table 1)*. These standards are the basis of the state Benchmark testing program. Reading First will further Alaska's assessment and accountability system *(Table2)* by providing the Reading First assessments in gradesK-3. Thus, Reading First sites will have a system of assessment and accountability in grades K-12.

Alaska has also supported the achievement of these goals and standards through significant investments of its own funds as well as successful applications for federal funds. Some of these funds, such as the Quality Schools / Learning Opportunity Grant program, support statewide reading programs. Other funds (e.g., REA) are used for specific groups of schools and students or for targeted purposes (e.g., professional development modules on early learning, tips for parents). In aggregate, the Alaska QSI provides both a strong record of accomplishment and a solid foundation on which to build for the future.

QSTL represent a significant FTE at the SEA level dedicated to providing service to Reading First schools and statewide outreach for other K-3 schools in scientifically based reading research methods. Alaska has dedicated significant SEA leadership and policy support FTE for Alaska Reading First. This commitment further strengthens Alaska's existing Quality School's Initiative to assure that all children can read at grade level. Through the Reading First Grant, this commitment will be supported by the addition of FTE dedicated solely to the success of Reading

Table 1: ALASKA READING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Between ages 5-7 (to be assessed in Grade 3) students:

R1.1.a. Distinguish, reproduce, and manipulate the sounds in words.
R1.1.b. Use a combination of the following to read and comprehend text:

- Knowledge of phonics, alphabet, and alphabetic principle, recognition of letter shapes, letter names, letter/sound relationships, initial/final consonants, vowels, letter patterns;
- Pictures and visual cues;
- Sight recognition of high frequency vocabulary words;
- Word structure, e.g., word order, grammar;
- Meaning structure, e.g., prior knowledge and context;
- Text structure, read from left

R1.2.a. Comprehend literal meaning from text.
R1.2.b. Use a variety of strategies to support comprehension, including predicting, questioning, rereading, and monitoring own comprehension.
R1.1.3. Read texts aloud with expression, demonstrating knowledge of punctuation and other conventions of print.
R1.4.a. Retell or dramatize a story after reading it.
R1.4.b. Restate information after reading a text.
R1.5. Identify the main idea of a passage.
R1.6. Read and follow simple directions to complete a simple task.
R1.7. Distinguish between common forms of text (genres):
a) Fiction and non-fiction, b)Prose and poetry, and c) Short story and drama.
R1.8. Identify and describe basic plot, main characters, and setting (time and place) in fiction.
R1.9. Express own opinions about texts.
R1.10. Make connections between a text and personal experiences, experiences of others, or other texts, and locate details in the text to illustrate these connections.
R1.11. Identify basic cultural influences in texts.

Between ages 8-10, (to be assessed in Grade 6) students:

R2.1.a. Use a combination of the following to read and comprehend text:

- Knowledge of phonetics, language structure, and semantics;
- Text structures such as illustrations, graphs, and headers;
- Self-monitoring and self-correcting strategies;
- Adjusting reading pace or style based on purpose, task, and type of text.

R2.1.b. Use knowledge of word families, phonetics, context clues, visual cues, and structural elements to determine meaning of unfamiliar words.
R2.2. Infer meaning from text.
R2.3. Read texts aloud with rhythm, flow, and expression, demonstrating knowledge of punctuation and other conventions of print.
R2.4.a. Retell stories in correct sequence.
R2.4.b. Restate and summarize information or ideas from a text.
R2.5. Locate evidence in the text and from related experiences to support understanding of a main idea.
R2.6. Read and follow multi-step directions to complete a simple task.
R2.7. Explain the characteristics of the following:

- Fiction and non-fiction,
- Prose and poetry, and four major genres of fiction: short story, drama, novel, and poetry.

R2.8.a. Define and identify plots, settings, and characters in fiction.
R2.8.b. Compare and contrast plots, settings, and characters in a variety of works by a variety of authors.
R2.9.a. Differentiate fact /opinion.
R2.9.b. Express opinions about a text and support these opinions with textual evidence.
R2.10. Identify themes in texts and connect them to personal experiences, experiences of others, and other texts.
R2.11. Connect cultural events, ideas, settings, and influences from one text to similar texts from other cultures.

Table 2: Alaska's Assessment and Accountability System: The Quality Schools Initiative

Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

July 17, 2001

Comprehensive Assessment Program	High School Graduation Qualifying Exam	Established in statute in 1997. Students must pass state assessments in reading, writing and math in order to graduate beginning in 2004 (as amended this year—original implementation date 2002). This standards-based exam was first administered statewide in March of 2000.
	State Standards	Content standards created 1991-1996. More detailed and measurable performance standards in reading, writing and math, adopted in regulation by the State Board of Education & Early Development in 1999.
	State Assessments in grades 3, 6 and 8	Established in statute in 1998, these standards-based assessments were first administered to students in March of 2000 and provided students and teachers with diagnostic information on student progress towards mastery of state standards.
	Developmental Profile	Established in statute in 1998, these profiles are done for every kindergarten or first grade student upon entering the public school system.
	National Testing	The CAT 5 was offered in grades 3 and 8 until the 1998 law passed. It was offered in grades 4 and 7 to fill out the assessment system after 1998. In school year 2002-2003 the Terra Nova will be offered in grades 4, 5, 7 and 9. ** The NAEP has not been administered in Alaska in recent years because it does not offer student, school or district level data while it takes time from classroom instruction in addition to state standards-based assessment and the CAT 5.*
Accountability	State Report Card to the Public	Redefined in statute in 1998, the State Report Card to the Public now provides school level data including national test results, state test results, student/family/community and business involvement in student learning, attendance, retention, dropout and graduation rates.
	School Designators	Created in statute in 1998, schools will be designated distinguished, successful, deficient or in crisis annually beginning August of 2002. A committee of Alaskans has been working on the formula for this definition which will primarily be based on student achievement.
	School Improvement Plans	Schools designated deficient or in crisis will submit a locally approved school improvement plan developed with meaningful public participation. If a school is deficient or in crisis two years in a row, the local team must present a school improvement plan to the State Board of Education & Early Development.
↑SEA Support for School Reform	Quality Schools Grant	Created in 1998, districts must apply for this earmarked state funding which is $16 per adjusted student. Grant applications have been focused on plans to adopt state standards, student intervention programs, and professional development.
	Education Funding Task Force Recommendations 5 Year Funding Plan	• Increase state funding through foundation formula and Quality Schools Grants. • Create Center for School Excellence as a partnership with the university to provide expertise and support for deficient or in crisis schools. • Assistance for low performing schools. • Alaska Online—Distance delivered courses. • Teacher loan assumption.
	Federal Funds for School Improvement	• Title I Accountability Grant, Title I School Improvement Funds, Title I Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Grant • IASA funds, Special Education Funds, Right Start Grant • Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant

B.2Alaska Reading Leadership Team

As stipulated in the Reading First legislation, Governor Knowles, in consultation with Commissioner of Education, Dr. Shirley Holloway and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, has established the Reading First Team as the initial leadership team for Reading First. This team has been charged with coordinating the state's Reading First Plan and assisting with oversight and evaluation components in the law. This team met on August 22, 2002 to provide the focus of Alaska's Reading First application. The membership and makeup of the Alaska Reading Leadership Team is detailed in the chart below:

PARTICIPANTS REQUIRED	ALASKA PARTICIPANTS
The Governor of the State	Governor Tony Knowles Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer
The chief State school officer	Commissioner Shirley Holloway
The chairman and the ranking member of each committee of the State legislature that is responsible for education policy	Representative Con Bunde Representative Reggie Joule Representative Fred Dyson Alaska State Board of Education, Susan Stitham; Student advisor to the Alaska State Board of Education, Megan Coffland
A representative selected jointly by the Governor and the chief State school officer, of at least one eligible local educational agency.	Superintendent Carol Comeau, Anchorage Schools; Superintendent Anne Shortt, Fairbanks North Star Borough Schools; Superintendent William Ferguson, Lower Kuskokwim Schools.
A representative, selected jointly by the Governor and the chief State school officer, of a community-based organization working with children to improve their reading skills, particularly a community-based organization using tutors and scientifically based reading research	Lani Fleischer, Executive Director, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Anchorage Inc.
State directors of appropriate Federal or State programs with a strong reading component, selected jointly by the Governor and the chief State school officer	Deputy Commissioner Ed McLain; Early Development Deputy Commissioner Yvonne Chase; P.J. Ford Slack, Director, Teaching and Learning Support, EED; Eric Madsen, Title I Administrator; Paul Sugar, Homeless, Evenstart Family Literacy, Parent /Community Education Administrator; Cathy Andregg, Director, State Improvement Grant; Beth Shober, Safe and Drug Free School Program Manager;

	Paul R. Prussing, REA Program.
PARTICIPANTS REQUIRED Continued	**ALASKA PARTICIPANTS** Continued
A parent of a public or private school student or a parent who educates the parent's child in the parent's home, selected jointly by the Governor and the chief State school officer	Jana Harcharek, North slope Borough Schools
A teacher, who may be a special education teacher, who successfully teaches reading, and another instructional staff member, selected jointly by the Governor and the chief State school officer.	Vivian Montoya, Alaska Teacher of the Year, Juneau School District; Jamie Harper, Special Education Program Manager, Kenai Borough Schools; Elaine Griffin, Head Teacher, Kodiak Island Borough School District
A family literacy service provider selected jointly by the Governor and the chief State school officer	Lolly Carpuk, Honoring Alaska Indigenous Literacy, AKRSI

OPTIONAL PARTICIPANTS	**ALASKA PARTICIPANTS**
An institution of higher education operating a program of teacher preparation in the State that is based on scientifically based reading research;	Marilyn Taylor, University of Alaska Southeast
Local educational agency	
Private nonprofit or for-profit eligible professional development provider providing instruction based on scientifically based reading research	Sarah Scanlan, First Alaskans Institute
An adult education provider	Joann Henderson, Southeast Regional Resource Center
A volunteer organization that is involved in reading programs	
A school library or a public library that offers reading or literacy programs for children or families	Sue Sherif, Youth Services Coordinator, State of Alaska Libraries and Museums

Alaska's Reading First program includes a model infrastructure designed to sustain Reading First in participating schools and expands statewide a program of beginning reading based on scientific principles derived from reading research. State and local resources will be used during and after the Reading First funding period to support this program expansion. Alaska's Reading First program builds on the Quality Schools statewide initiative already in place.

2C. State Management Plan—What staff will the LEA provide for the administration of the Reading First program? What is the timeline for carrying out activities related to the administration of the Reading First program? How will resources be used to implement the Reading First program?

C.1 Overview of Management Plan

EED is committed to providing strong support and leadership for Reading First to ensure students in Alaska Reading First schools meet the goal of reading proficiently by the end of grade 3. This commitment is shown by the broad background and range of experience of management and staff that will be assigned to work with the Reading First. Support for statewide reading improvement begins with the Commissioner of the Department of Education & Early Development and the Director of the Teaching and Learning Support (TLS). TLS provides support to Pre-K through 12 educational programs, with special attention being given to teacher preparation and certification, students needing specialized support and services, and measuring and improving student and school progress. Reading First will be a part of the TLS Department as all educational programming staff (Quality School Team Leaders, QSTL's qualifications appendix III, Time line; appendix VIII) are found within TLS. Access to QSTL's working with activities to be coordinated with Reading First (i.e., teacher preparation, student assessment, early childhood education, special education) is readily available.

EED will hire a full-time Alaska Reading First Director to support, coordinate and monitor all Reading First activities in the state. This will be an Educational Specialist II position as outline in Appendix III. The job description will be designed to ensure that the Director will have expertise in scientifically based reading research and will help increase the QSTL's capacity to provide additional technical assistance. It will be the responsibility of this director and QSTL's at EED to make certain that the Alaska Reading First results in the reform of reading instruction in the selected schools. Although Alaska has a long history of independently minded administrators at the district and school level, participation in Alaska Reading First will be dependent on the willingness of districts and schools to adhere to the very explicit and structured expectations for professional development of teachers, teachers' aides and administrators. Participating districts will be closely monitored to guide the development of a comprehensive Reading First plan and the implementation of a system for gathering, managing and analyzing reading assessment data.

In addition to the Reading First Director, Mr. Paul R. Prussing will provide additional support and oversight to the Reading First Program. Mr. Prussing is the currently the acting Deputy Director of the Division of Teaching and Learning support at EED and has oversight of the Reading Excellence Act (REA) program. He is knowledgeable in providing statewide training for principals, teachers, and Para educators in scientifically based reading strategies that are the focus of the Alaska REA project. In addition to this Reading expertise, Mr. Prussing brings a strong background and understanding of federal program management. He has worked with the Title I / Title I Neglected & Delinquent / Migrant program as an Education Specialist and was the Program Manager for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program (GEAR UP). He is a 28-year resident to the State of Alaska, a former Alaska teacher, and a 1988 graduate of

Oregon State University with a B.S. in Education. His experience in program collaboration and understanding of statewide educational needs will increase the effectiveness of professional development activities that are a critical component of the Alaska Reading First program proposal.

The Reading First Director will support, coordinate and monitor all Reading First activities in the state. It will be the responsibility of Reading First Director, Mr. Prussing, and QSTL's at EED to make certain that the Alaska Reading First results in the reform of reading instruction in the selected schools. Although Alaska has a long history of independently minded administrators at the district and school level, participation in Alaska Reading First will be dependent on the willingness of districts and schools to adhere to the very explicit and structured expectations for professional development of teachers, teachers' aides and administrators. Participating districts will be closely monitored to guide the development of a comprehensive Reading First plan and the implementation of a system for gathering, managing and analyzing reading assessment data.

Reading First Director, Mr. Prussing and QSTL's will be responsible for managing the overall Reading First program throughout the state and for monitoring and communicating progress towards all students reading at grade level by third grade. This will entail close collaboration with the Reading First Leadership team. The Director of Reading First and designated QSTL's will be responsible for communicating activities and evaluation results to the legislature and stakeholders and to the members of the Reading First Leadership team to be disseminated to the legislature and Alaska's system of public education.

It will also be the responsibility of the Director and designated QSTL's to coordinate statewide technical assistance and professional development to avoid repetitious or inefficient service. The Director of Reading First and QSTL's will meet quarterly with the BRI contractor to evaluate completed activities and prepare project plans for the upcoming quarter. (See Section 2a)

It is imperative that Alaska maximizes the use of the Reading First funds. As indicated under Section I; F.2 Professional Development Structures; page 74:

Priority One: *Building state level capacity –Professional development of state QSTL's, other state specialists, content area specialist, and Reading Leadership Team*.
This priority involves building the capacity of the QSTL's and other personnel who work directly with schools on a variety needs. This is an effort to coordinate state staff in other areas by making them cognizant of the Reading Excellence and Reading First programs. By coordinating our efforts and training QSTL staff in SBRR strategies, all of the state level staff will be better prepared to provide schools with comprehensive and coherent assistance in reading instruction. Part of this capacity building will be the identification of eligible SBRR professional development providers across the state through the Reading First SBRR professional development application process. This priority is critical, as Alaska does not have the funding to hire a large SBRR team nor a large pool of SBRR candidates to draw from. Having QSTL's attending the BRI's, providing specific SBRR training through the REA consultants, Dr. Marcy Stein and Dr. David Chard, will assist Reading First in building this state level capacity to support SBRR programs across the state. QSTL's knowledge of the NCLB consolidated programs and the in-depth

understanding of state funding sources along with the understanding of the challenges districts face, will provide a critical link for both Reading First districts and non-Reading First districts in implementing SBBR K-3 programs. It is through building on this strength that will ensure that the Alaska Reading First will meet Alaska's and USED's intended goals and objectives for the program.

C.2 Allocation and Use of Funds Reserved by the State

DRAFT Alaska Reading First Budget

Project	Year 1 (02-03)	Year 2 (03-04)	Year 3 (04-05)	Year 4 (05-06)	Year 5 (06-07)	Year 6 (07-08)
	$2,158,750	$2,400,000	$2,400,000	$2,400,000	$2,400,000	$2,400,000
20% SEA	**$431,750**	**$480,000**	**$480,000**	**$480,000**	**$480,000**	**$480,000**
Sub grants to LEAs Proposed Allocation (80%)						
Sub grants to schools	$1,727,000	$1,920,000	$1,920,000	$1,920,000	$1,920,000	$1,920,000
Professional Development (65% of SEA 20%, $280,637)						
Beginning Reading Institutes:	$225,000	$256,350	$256,350	$256,350	$256,350	$256,350
Orientation/Grant Writing workshop	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000
Printed Costs	$6,500	$6,500	$6,500	$6,500	$6,500	$6,500
In-state travel	$9,500	$9,500	$9,500	$9,500	$9,500	$9,500
Reading Leadership Team travel	$13,000	$13,000	$13,000	$13,000	$13,000	$13,000
Indirect	$11,650	$11,650	$11,650	$11,650	$11,650	$11,650
Subtotal	**$280,650**	**$312,000**	**$312,000**	**$312,000**	**$312,000**	**$312,000**
Technical Assistance (25% of SEA 20%, $107,937)						
EED Specialist II FTE, Clerk FTE & benefits	$92,000	$96,000	$98,000	$100,000	$102,000	$104,000
Materials	$15,925	$24,000	$22,000	$20,000	$18,000	$16,000
Subtotal	**$107,925**	**$120,000**	**$120,000**	**$120,000**	**$120,000**	**$120,000**
Planning and Administration (10% of SEA 20%, $43,175)						
External Evaluation Operational Expenses (office supplies, postage,ect.)	$36,000	$40,000	$40,000	$40,000	$40,000	$40,000
Out of State travel-required	$7,175	$8,000	$8,000	$8,000	$8,000	$8,000
Subtotal	$43,175	$48,000	$48,000	$48,000	$48,000	$48,000
Total	**$431,750**	**$480,000**	**$480,000**	**$480,000**	**$480,000**	**$480,000**

Section 3: State Reporting and Evaluation

The SEA's application describes the strategies the State will use to evaluate the effectiveness of its Reading First program and to report required information annually. The application explains how the SEA will effectively monitor the academic impact of Reading First on sub grant LEAs, and the steps the SEA will take in the event of inadequate academic progress. The application must specifically address the following:

A. How will the SEA evaluate the progress participating LEAs are making in improving reading achievement? How will the SEA use evaluation data to make decisions about continuation funding to LEAs?

External Evaluation: Northwest Regional Education Laboratory
The program evaluation contractor, the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, in Portland, Oregon has demonstrated capability and experience in conducting program evaluations based on scientific research models, particularly in the area of reading. Experienced NWREL staff from their Evaluation and Assessment office will participate fully in the initiative and offer advice and recommendations throughout the process. NWREL is currently conducting the external evaluation for the REA **Read Alaska** grant.

The evaluation plan for Alaska Reading First was developed with attention to the USED performance goals and objectives for the Reading First Program:

Reading First State Grants - 2004

CFDA Number: 84.357 - Reading First State Grants

Goal 8: To improve kindergarten through third grade student achievement in reading by supporting State and local educational agencies in establishing reading programs that are based on scientifically based reading research.

Objective 8.1 of 3: To increase the percentage of students that learn to read proficiently by the end of third grade.

Indicator 8.1.1 of 3: Reading Achievement in Reading First Schools: The percentage of grades 1-3 students reading at grade level or above in schools participating in Reading First programs, as measured by meeting or exceeding the proficient level of performance on state reading assessments, will increase.		
Targets and Performance Data	Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality

Percentage of students in Reading First schools in grades 1-3 meeting or exceeding proficient level in reading. **Year** | **Actual Performance** | **Performance Targets** Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 **2003** | | | | 999 | 999 | 999 **2003** | | | | 999 | 999 | 999 ***Alaska will use the DIBELS assessment as an Alaska 3rd grade Benchmark proficiency predictor in grades 1-2. (See appendix VII) Alaska 3rd grade benchmark will be used for grade 3.***	**Explanation:** FY 2003 data will set the baseline; targets for FY 2004 and subsequent years will be determined after baseline data are reported. ***Alaska baseline data will be gathered during Implementation year 1 (May 2004-June 2005)***	**Additional Source Information:** Reading First Annual Performance Report. Recipients of Reading First grants, as required by statute, will submit Annual Performance Reports on reading results for students in grades 1, 2, and 3. **Frequency:** Annually. **Collection Period:** 2002 - 2003 **Data Available:** 2003 **Validated By:** No Formal Verification.

Indicator 8.1.2 of 3: Reading Achievement in Reading First Schools for At-Risk Students: The percentage of grades 1-3 at-risk Reading First students reading at grade level or above, as measured by meeting or exceeding the proficient level of performance on state reading assessments, will increase.

Targets and Performance Data	Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
Percentage of at-risk RF students in grades 1-3 meeting or exceeding proficient level in reading. **Year** | **Actual Performance** | **Performance Targets** Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 **2003** | | | | 999 | 999 | 999 ***Alaska will use the DIBELS assessment as an Alaska 3rd grade Benchmark proficiency predictor in grades 1-2. (See appendix VII) Alaska 3rd grade benchmark will be used for grade 3.***	**Explanation:** FY 2003 data will set the baseline; targets for FY 2004 and subsequent years will be determined after baseline data are reported. ***Alaska baseline data will be gathered during Implementation year***	**Additional Source Information:** Reading First Annual Performance Report. **Frequency:** Annually. **Collection Period:** 2002 - 2003 **Data Available:** 2003

	1 (May 2004-June 2005)	**Validated By:** No Formal Verification.

Indicator 8.1.3 of 3: Reading Achievement Statewide: The percentage of students reading at grade level or above, as measured by meeting or exceeding the proficient level on the NAEP reading assessment.

Targets and Performance Data	Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
Percentage of students at proficiency or above on NAEP 4th grade reading assessment. **Year** / **Actual Performance** / **Performance Targets** **2000** / 29 / **2002** / / 30 **2003** / / 31 **2005** / / 32 ***All Alaska Reading First sites will participate in the NAEP as needed***		**Additional Source Information:** National Assessment of Educational Progress. **Frequency:** Biennially. **Collection Period:** 2003 **Data Available:** 2003 **Validated By:** NCES.

Objective 8.2 of 3: To decrease the percentage of kindergarten through third grade students in schools participating in Reading First who are referred for special education services based on their difficulties learning to read.

Indicator 8.2.1 of 1: Referrals to Special Education: Percentage of RF K-3 students referred for special education services based on their difficulties learning to read.

Targets and Performance Data	Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
Percentage of RF K-3 students referred for special education services. **Year** / **Actual Performance** / **Performance Targets** **2003** / / 999 ***All Reading First LEA's will track and report all special education reading referrals.***	**Explanation:** FY 2003 data will set the baseline; targets for FY 2004 and subsequent years will be determined after baseline data are reported. ***Alaska baseline data will be gathered during Implementation year 1 (May 2004-June 2005)***	**Additional Source Information:** Reading First Annual Performance Report. Recipients of Reading First grants, as required by statute, will submit an Annual Performance Report that includes data for this indicator

Objective 8.3 of 3: To advance the success of the Reading First program by monitoring the progress of states in implementing their approved state plans.

Indicator 8.3.1 of 1: Implementation of Reading First Programs: The percentage of states that demonstrate progress in the implementation of their Reading First programs, as outlined in their approved state plans, will reach 100%.

Targets and Performance Data	Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
Percentage of States that demonstrate progress in implementing approved Reading First plans. **Year** / **Actual Performance** / **Performance Targets** **2003** /	**Explanation:** FY 2003 data will set the baseline; targets for FY 2004 and subsequent years will be determined after baseline data are reported.	**Additional Source Information:** Reading First Annual Performance Report. **Frequency:** Annually. **Collection Period:** 2002 - 2003 **Data Available:** 2003 **Validated By:** No Formal Verification.
999 ***Alaska will met all USED Reading First Reporting requirements***.		

This page last modified—April 2, 2003 (jer).

The Reading First Evaluation will be utilization-focused, relying on both quantitative and qualitative data sources and multiple methods to develop a rich and valid understanding of the implementation of and outcomes from activities funded by Alaska Reading First. Intended uses of the evaluation findings are both formative and summative and reporting will be multi-level. As an aid to program improvement, the goal is to put evaluation data into the hands of LEA Reading First staff, technical and professional development providers, and state agency personnel on a frequent and regular basis so that they will use it to guide decision-making and management of the initiative as a whole. To judge the progress and summative impact of the initiative as a whole, evaluation results will be reported to EED and to USED annually, at midpoint (no later than 60 days after the end of year 3) and at the end of the grant period.

Because of the importance of local use of the evaluation data and the accountability demands of this initiative, all Reading First sites will participate in the evaluation. Random evaluation site visits will be made to all sub grant LEAs over the life of the

project. Classrooms within sites will be randomly sampled for observations and inclusion in the nonequivalent comparison group study of program effectiveness. For all other measures (i.e., Teacher Observational Surveys, Local assessment data, Achievement Testing), the evaluation sample includes all participating classrooms. The evaluation will be modeled after the current REA program evaluation:

The overarching goal of the Alaska READING FIRST project is to "improve reading for children in high poverty schools and in schools that need improvement by supporting research-based reading instruction and tutoring."

Within this broader goal fall the following objectives:
1. Significantly improve students' achievement in participating schools and classrooms.
2. Build the capacity of the state and local districts to design and implement improvement strategies for reading instruction that result in effective changes in the classroom.
3. Increase the number of well-trained tutors using research-based practices to help students learn.
4. Expand the number and activities of family literacy programs that help parents support their students' reading development.

Key Evaluation Questions
Evaluation activities are undertaken to examine both the implementation of the project as well as its outcomes. Key questions about project implementation questions include the following:

1. What professional development activities are provided to teachers and other instructional staff under ALASKA READING FIRST? How is professional development delivered?
2. What curricular materials do ALASKA READING FIRST schools adopt, and how are they used in the classroom?
3. What instructional approaches are promoted under the REA, and to what extent are they adopted and used in the classrooms of ALASKA READING FIRST schools?
4. To what extent does the ALASKA READING FIRST grant provide extended learning opportunities to students who are reading below grade level? How are struggling students identified and how is intervention delivered?
5. How are the instructional needs of English-language learners addressed under the grant?
6. In what ways does the ALASKA READING FIRST grant promote family literacy as a means of improving children's reading ability?
7. In what ways does the ALASKA READING FIRST grant promote connections between the school and local efforts to work with preschool-aged children?
8. To what degree does the ALASKA READING FIRST grant promote genuine change in participating schools? How supportive are teachers and paraprofessional staff of that change?
9. How has the implementation of the grant affected the school? Has there been any unanticipated impact?

Evaluation questions that focus on the outcome of the project's efforts include:

1. What are the effects of ALASKA READING FIRST activities on children's growth in reading ability? What evidence exists that students are improving in reading? Are there sub-groups of students who are performing above or below other students?
2. What evidence exists that targeted interventions are succeeding?
3. How has the experience of the ALASKA READING FIRST grant affected the number of students referred to special education?

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected to address the questions listed above.

Evaluation Instruments
A number of different measures and instruments will be employed in order to gather information about the functioning and impact of the ALASKA READING FIRST grants.

Site Coordinator Surveys

Each district has a site coordinator/mentor responsible for the ALASKA READING FIRST schools within that district. Surveys of these individuals will be conducted (via mail and electronically) twice during each grant year: once in November 2004, to establish baseline information about instructional practices, once in the spring of 2005, and again each fall and spring of the grant year.

Site Administrator Surveys

Site administrators of ALASKA READING FIRST schools will also be surveyed twice, in the fall and again in spring. The focus of the principal survey will be on the implementation of the grant at their school, including the use of assessments, interpretation of data, allocation of time for reading instruction and tutoring or other interventions, as well as their perception of teacher reaction to the ALASKA READING FIRST program and the effectiveness of the BRI's and LRI's.

Teacher Surveys

Teachers of grade K-3 at all ALASKA READING FIRST schools will also be surveyed twice during the school year, once in the fall and again in the spring. The focus of the survey will be on their experience with the implementation of the grant, particularly with their receipt of professional development and with changes in the delivery of reading instruction. It will also ask about tutoring and other interventions with struggling students. Site liaisons will be asked to distribute and collect the surveys from all reading teachers and all paraprofessional staff who support K-3 reading instruction in the school. All information collected will be treated as confidential and reported only in summary form.Selected Site Visits
As much information as surveys can provide, they do not always offer the insights and nuances that come from being on-site at a school that is implementing significant changes. Furthermore, teachers may hold different understandings of the meaning of

terminology and indicate on a survey that they are using certain practices that in fact they are not (or vice versa). For this reason, site visits that include classroom observations are key to the evaluators' clear understanding of project implementation.

Site visits typically last a full day and consist of interviews with the site administrator and the site liaison. They also include the observation of at least two classrooms during reading instruction, and of one or more tutoring sessions, as well as a brief visit to any affiliated preschool program. *In order to ensure implementation fidelity, program observation forms developed by the University of Texas at Houston's Center for Academic and Reading Skills will be utilized*. In addition, teacher interviews (individually or in a group, as appropriate) are conducted during the visit. In schools that have major family literacy initiatives, a focus group with parents is also conducted.

The extreme distances, remote locations and weather conditions characteristic of Alaska pose unique challenges to the evaluators who would usually go out to a school in the late spring. For these reasons, only a subset of sites (at least five per year) will have a visit from the evaluation team. Selections will have to consider issues of access and travel, but at the same time, work to ensure that some of the more remote "bush" schools are represented among the site visit schools.

Table 1
Summary of Project Objectives, Evaluation Questions, and Evaluation Instruments/ Measures

	Key Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Instruments/Measures
Significantly improve students' achievement in participating schools and classrooms.	• What are the effects of ALASKA READING FIRSTactivities on children's growth in reading ability? What evidence exists that students are improving in reading? Are there sub-groups of students who are performing above or below other students? • What evidence exists that targeted interventions are succeeding? • How has the experience of the ALASKA READING FIRST grant affected the number of students referred to special education?	DIBELS Other locally selected SBRR assessment Alaska state benchmark assessment Survey of district coordinator or site administrator (special education referrals)
Build the capacity of the state and local districts to design and implement improvement strategies for reading instruction that result in effective changes in the classroom.	• What professional development activities are provided to teachers and other instructional staff under REA? How is professional development delivered? • What curricular materials do ALASKA READING FIRST schools adopt, and how are they used in the classroom? • What instructional approaches are promoted under the REA, and to what extent are they adopted and used in the classrooms of ALASKA READING FIRST schools? • How are the instructional needs of English-language learners addressed under the grant? • In what ways doe the ALASKA READING FIRST grant promote connections between the school and local efforts to work with preschool-aged children? • To what degree does the ALASKA READING FIRST grant promote genuine change in participating schools? How supportive are teachers and paraprofessional staff of that change? • How has the implementation of the grant affected the school? Has there been any unanticipated impact?	Surveys with district coordinator, site administrator, site liaison, teachers Interviews with selected site administrator and site liaison during site visits Classroom and tutoring observations. *In order to ensure implementation fidelity, program observation forms developed by the University of Texas at Houston's Center for Academic and Reading Skills will be utilized.
Increase the number of well-trained tutors using research-based practices to help students learn.	• To what extent does the ALASKA READING FIRST grant provide extended learning opportunities to students who are reading below grade level? How are struggling students identified and how is intervention delivered?	District coordinator, site administrator and teacher survey Observations of tutoring during site visits
Expand the number and activities of family literacy programs that help parents support their students' reading development.	• In what ways does the ALASKA READING FIRST grant promote family literacy as a means of improving children's reading ability?	Surveys with district coordinator, site administrator, site liaison, teachers Interviews with selected site administrator and site liaison during site visits Focus groups with parents

Data Analysis / Implementation Data
The evaluation of the implementation of the Alaska READING FIRST program will include both quantitative and qualitative data. For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations will be calculated as appropriate to develop a profile of program implementation status.

The content of qualitative data, such as open-ended comments on surveys or interview and observational data, will be analyzed to identify consistent patterns and trends in program implementation, including facilitating conditions and common challenges. The evaluation will also collect and report information from participants about recommendations and suggestions for program improvement.

Outcome Data
Evaluation Targets and Measures
Student Reading Performance, K-3

Student reading performance will be evaluated using measures presented in Section IV, Table 1(page 119). Screening, progress monitoring measures, and outcome measures will be used to evaluate student reading performance at specific points in time (i.e., beginning, middle or end of the year) as well as performance over time. Student performance on diagnostic measures will be used in the analysis of instructional interventions for students receiving strategic and intensive interventions.

The distinction between performance on screening and outcome measures, which implies measurement at a specific point in time, and progress monitoring measures, which implies analysis over time, is important. Of central importance is the fact that some students who may begin the school year with relatively low or high reading skills, may demonstrate significant progress, or very little progress, during the year. Progress measured this way— that is, by analyzing where a student finishes the academic year in relation to where that particular student began the year—is calculated in a way that is independent of the level of skill the student demonstrates at any specific point during the academic year. Progress measured in this idiopathic way is an important consideration in evaluating the success of a reading program.

The contrast is performance on outcome measures in particular (although the idea also applies to performance on screening measures). On outcome measures, the central idea is to assess student performance at key points in time during the academic year— usually at the end of each grade in K-3. These data are key determinants in whether students have reached critical benchmark performance levels that define successful reading at particular points in time. The idea is that the performance of any individual student is examined in the context of the performance of other students, usually students in the same grade and sometimes students who are similar in other important ways (e.g., a group of English-language learners). One commonly used benchmark standard is grade level performance on a norm-referenced test. In addition to monitoring progress, the DIBELS measures can also be used to assess student outcomes at critical time points. Other reading measures listed in Section IV, Table 1, such as the Woodcock-Johnson (WRMT-R)), and the Alaska 3rd grade Benchmark will also be used for outcome assessments.

The evaluation works under the premise that professional development in and support of proven instructional practices will lead to improved reading instruction, which in turn will result in improved student performance in reading. Thus student assessments form the core of the

outcome data. Student assessments will be analyzed to examine school means as well as rates of improvement over the year. To the degree possible, findings will be disaggregated by key demographic variables, as well as by whether or not students received intensive interventions. In addition to the simple reporting of performance levels, the following analyses will be included in the report:

- Comparison to national norms. Portions of the DIBELS assessment include information about reading fluency rates in words correct per minute (wcpm). For the second and third grade, national norms exist[1] that allow the calculation of the percentage of students in a school who are reading "at level" (defined as at or above the 50th percentile).
- Comparison group analysis. Wherever data are available, comparisons to similar schools, often within the district. Such analyses will not be possible in all instances, as there are not always comparable schools administering the same assessments. Efforts will be made, for example, to obtain data from different district schools (which would have several ALASKA READING FIRST and a number of non-ALASKA READING FIRST schools that may share similar assessment schedules).
- Cohort analyses. First-grade students in the first year (2004-2005) will be compared to second-grade students in the second year (2005-2006) to examine whether having been taught under the ALASKA READING FIRST guidelines for two years contributed to higher student achievement. The same analyses will take place for second- and third-grade students.
- Regression analysis. A multiple regression analysis will be conducted to obtain additional evidence of program impact. The analysis uses statewide data about student's performance on the third-grade state benchmark assessment and information about student poverty levels (as measured by Free/Reduced Lunch eligibility) to predict levels of student performance on the third-grade benchmark assessment at any given school. This "predicted" level of achievement can then be compared to actual achievement in the spring of 2003 and 2004 to determine whether the ALASKA READING FIRST program helped schools to achieve at a higher-than-predicted level.

Reports

Preliminary evaluation will be shared on an on-going basis, as they become available

The first-year report will provide information on program implementation and outcomes, including data obtained from all implementation and impact measures. The preceding reports will summarize implementation and impact data for the project years, as well as evidence of relationships between ALASKA READING FIRST activities and student outcomes.

For all reports, a draft version will be provided to state project staff for review. Feedback obtained in the review process will be incorporated in the final version.

Each report will include an executive summary, as well as a set of conclusions and recommendations. The first-year report will also provide suggestions for program improvement. Evaluation data and findings will be presented in a user-friendly way, including the use of graphs and narratives in succinct language.

[1] Hasbrouck, J., and Tindal, G. (1992). Curriculum-based oral reading fluency norms for students in grades 2 through 5. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 24* (3), 41-44.

In addition, evaluation findings will be presented at conferences and/or debriefings with all state and ALASKA READING FIRST project staff and Reading First sites.

B. How will the SEA meet all of its Reading First reporting requirements?

Student reading performance for reporting purposes will be determined each year a Reading First School participates in Reading First. A Reading First school's focus during Year One funding will be establishing the assessment framework and beginning to implement a comprehensive program. *Using the USED approved Adequately Early Progress (AYP) plan for Title I as a model,* student data collected during this first year will serve as a baseline against which the full implementation of the comprehensive reading program, which will be strongly emphasized in Year Two. Schools should make consistent and steady progress in terms of student reading outcomes and quality of implementation during that second year. Funding in Year Two will depend on establishing the necessary assessment framework and beginning implementation of a comprehensive beginning reading program. Implementation Year 3 funding will depend on Reading First schools making adequate yearly progress during Implementation Year Two in achieving high quality implementation and improving student reading outcomes. If, at the end of the second year of implementation, the performance of students has not improved appreciably compared to second year outcomes, that school's Reading First funding may be discontinued. The goals, objectives, and outcomes are outlined in Section 3 A. Before that happens, however, a school will be provided with extensive opportunities for extra professional development and technical assistance and ongoing feedback that is highly prescriptive in terms of procedures to improve student reading performance.

The goal of this AYP model for Reading First is to ensure that the statutory reporting requirements of: 1) progress of Reading First LEAs and schools in reducing the number of grades 1-3 students reading below grade level; 2) whether the SEA and LEAs within the state have significantly increased the percentage of students reading at grade level or higher, disaggregated by low-income, major racial/ethnic groups, LEP, and special education; and, 3) LEAs and schools making the largest gains in reading achievement, are met.

A report of all schools that are discontinued from Reading First grants will detail the reasons for discontinuance, and the efforts that were undertaken to improve implementation quality and student reading outcomes. These reports will be submitted to the USED at the end of the academic year. A yearly evaluation report on outcomes and implementation progress of the Alaska Reading First grant will contain information generated by the external evaluation team.

The external evaluation report, in particular, will report on the details of school and district level progress in implementing their Reading First plans. These reports will also highlight student reading progress and outcomes, which will be disaggregated by free/reduced lunch status, major racial/ethnic groups, English-language learner status, and special education status. This report will indicate not only average performance for these groups, but will also indicate the percentages of students that are below specific benchmark and grade level standard, as well as the percentages of students who are seriously at risk for reading failure. The evaluation will include all sites that receive funding during the Reading First program.

Using the common assessment measures as indicated on page 119, all Reading First sites will be evaluated on greatest gains using this common core of assessment measures. All sites will be required to establish benchmarks during the first year of implementing their Reading First program. From this benchmarking year, EED will be able to determine who is making the greatest gains in their Reading First Program. Having this mandatory common core of assessments will also assist EED in meeting the reporting requirements as outlined in the Draft USED Reading First program report.

C. Will the SEA and sub grant LEAs, if asked, participate in the national evaluation of the Reading First program?

Alaska is willing to participate in the identification of comparison districts and schools for use in the national evaluation of Reading First. We will also require that districts that apply for Reading First funds indicate their willingness to participate in the national evaluation of Reading First.

Section 4: Classroom Level Impact

The SEAs application describes how the many facets of its Reading first plan will result in improved classroom reading instruction. The application includes the SEA's vision for how a Reading First classroom will look and demonstrates the integration and coherence among the many components of the plan. The application must specifically address the following: (See also Section 1b)

A. Key Reading First Classroom Characteristics – What is the SEA's vision for how a Reading First classroom will look?

B. Coherence – How will the SEA demonstrate that all activities are based on scientifically based reading research and integrated in a coherent manner? Note: Although reviewers will evaluate the overall coherence of the SEA's plan, applicants need not specifically address this topic as a separate section of the application.

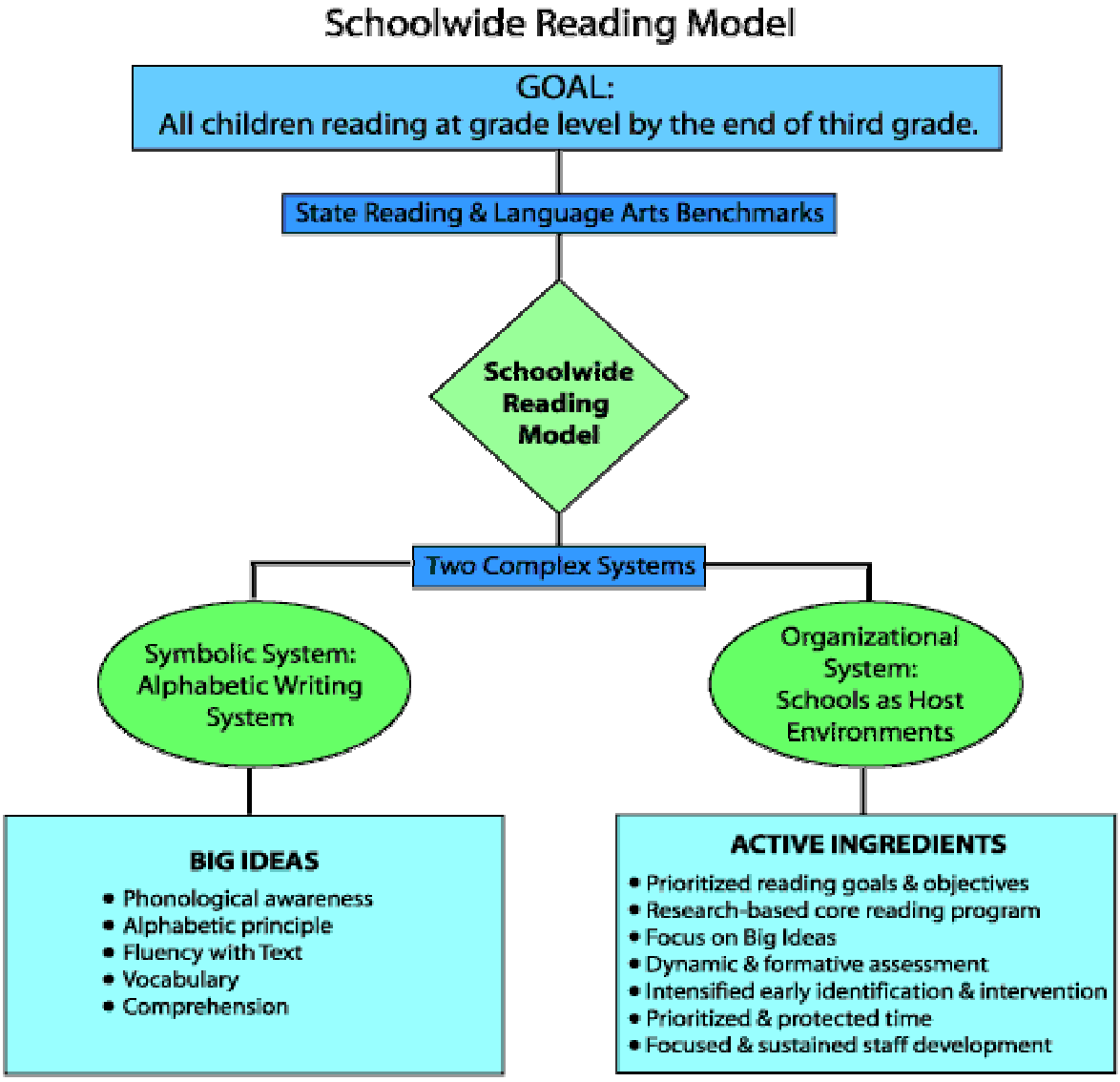
Approximately 14 schools will participate as Reading First schools in Alaska Reading First. Participant schools will change their classroom reading instruction by implementing a research-based Schoolwide Beginning Reading Model.(http://reading.uoregon.edu/logistics/index.php) The five stages of this model are described following a brief rationale for targeting the school as the primary unit of change and is modeled after Oregon's Reading First Plan.

An organizing principle of the literature on school change suggests that the problem of scaling up actually requires "scaling down," implying that large, urban districts must behave organizationally, administratively, and pedagogically like small districts (Elmore, 1996). That is, instructional variables within school jurisdictions that account for differences in learner performance are the same across districts irrespective of size. The fundamental sameness about reading improvement is that within every school's jurisdiction there are alterable variables

(Carroll, 1963) capable of producing positive and sustainable results for the full range of learners. These alterable variables are constant across schools irrespective of size or location.

Schoolwide reading improvement involves the integration of two complex systems: (a) the symbolic system implicated when reading in an alphabetic writing system, and (b) the complex organizational and administrative systems implicated when attempting to organize and implement what is known about reading in a host environment comprised of people, practices, pedagogy, and policy known as schools. The following graphic (Figure 1) details the elements of both systems and the need for strategic integration to assist schools in attaining the goal of all children reading by Grade 3.

Figure 1: Two complex systems in Schoolwide Beginning Reading Improvement Model



The graphic is necessarily simplistic and belies the complexity of the process. The action plan, nonetheless, is similar irrespective of school size, site, or socioeconomic status. In the following section, we describe a set of tenets to guide the Alaska Reading First model. In addition, we discuss a schoolwide model of reading achievement for translating research into practice.

Statewide Beginning Reading Model: Tenets and Stages

We propose that the school must be the fundamental unit of change to effect significant and sustainable reading improvement. The Alaska Reading First model of reading improvement will adhere to research-based tenets (Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Tenets of the Schoolwide Beginning Reading Model
Schoolwide reading improvement:

(a) addresses reading success and reading failure from a schoolwide systemic perspective,
(b) embraces a prevention framework by intervening early and strategically during the critical window of instructional opportunity,
(c) recognizes and responds to the multiple contexts of reading achievement including carefully articulated goals, research-based programs, dynamic assessment, adequate and protected time, quality instructional delivery, differentiated instruction, and effective organization and grouping,
(d) develops and promotes a system of instruction based on a research-based comprehensive reading program and supplemental materials,
(e) anchors instruction and practices to the converging knowledge base of effective reading practice,
(f) builds capacity in the school by using school-based teams to customize interventions to the host environment,
(g) relies on and fosters the ability of the school principal to serve as the instructional leader, and
(h) uses formative, dynamic assessments of student performance to screen students for reading problems, diagnose instructional needs, monitor progress, and determine outcomes.

Collectively, these principles characterize an approach to reading improvement that is proactive, intensive, effective, and sustainable for the full range of learners in schools. Next, we delineate a set of actions and decisions Reading First schools will undertake as they work toward the goal of all children reading by Grade 3.

The architectural blueprint of the Alaska Reading First model is framed by five successive stages of commitments, goals, and activities in each Reading First School. Within each stage are two distinct levels that operate concurrently—a school level and a student level (See Figure 3). The premise of the two levels is that school-level decisions have consequences for ALL individual students. Similarly, in order to address all students, a model must necessarily address EACH student. Therefore, a schoolwide model must plan for both school-level procedures and provisions for the needs of each individual student.

The model and its decision-making processes draw extensively on the work in reading assessment of Kaminski and Good (1996) and Shinn (1998) and combines their procedures for identifying, grouping, problem solving, and performance monitoring with the work of Kame‘enui and Simmons’ (1990; 1998; 2000) components of contextual interventions to reflect an integrated and comprehensive intervention model.

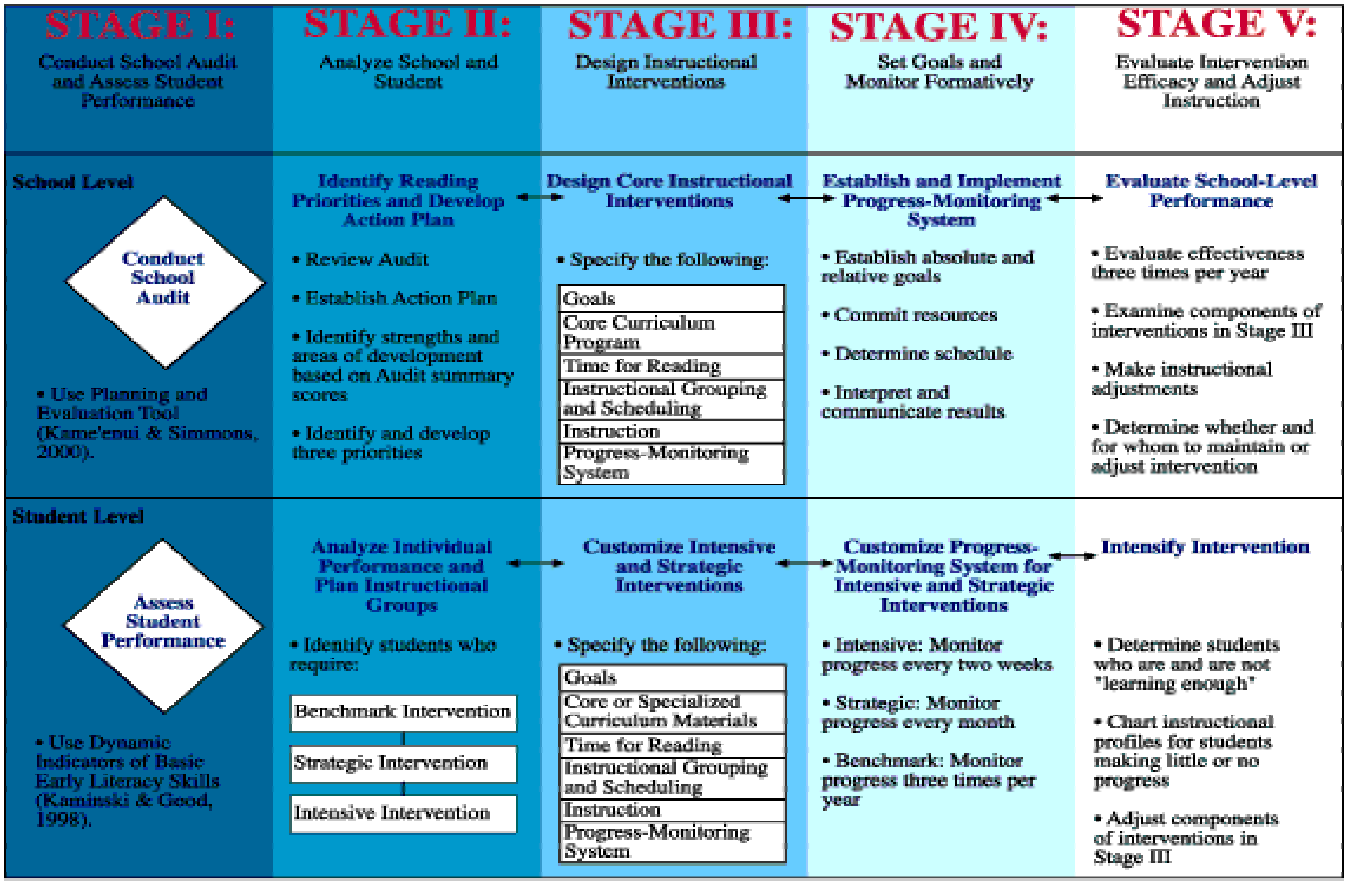
The translation of the knowledge base of beginning reading to practice in schools is built on and nurtured by a common set of components operationalized in the five stages of the model. A primary objective of this model is to prevent reading difficulty and disability and to intervene

strategically to provide instruction as early and effectively as possible. For children who are having difficulty learning the essential components of reading, the model allows schools to determine: (a) the magnitude of the problem at a school level, (b) who will require strategic and intensive intervention, (c) essential dimensions of intervention and their contextual fit, (d) the amount of growth necessary to change early reading trajectories, (e) the effectiveness of the intervention, (f) the staff development needs of teachers to deliver the interventions, and (g) whether children are learning enough (Carnine, 1997). The methodological integration of content knowledge of effective reading instruction (Adams, 1990; Lyon 1998; 2001; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000; Simmons & Kame'enui, 1998), general and special education research in assessment (e.g., Good, Simmons, & Smith, 1998), effective instructional design principles (Kame'enui & Carnine, 1998), and intervention models that fit the host environment (Sugai & Horner, in press) reveals the complexity of what is necessary to intercept and prevent early reading difficulties from becoming long -term, intractable difficulties.

Stage I: Conduct School Audit and Assess Student Performance K-3

Activities and actions in Stage I focus on two critical levels—the school and the individual student. As illustrated in Figure 3, the primary functions in Stage I are (a) for the school to conduct a thorough and instructionally focused audit of current reading practices and (b) to assess each student's reading performance on a set of screening measures that can be used to help identify which students require strategic and intensive interventions.

Figure 3: Stages and Levels of a Schoolwide Beginning Reading Model



Conduct school audit. The first goal for a school is to determine what is currently in place with respect to (a) instructional priorities, (b) reading assessment, (c) instructional practices and

materials, (d) time allocated to reading instruction, (e) grouping and organizational strategies, (f) administrative involvement and decision making, and (g) professional development. To obtain this information, schools conduct an internal audit using the Planning and Evaluation Tool for Effective Schoolwide Reading Programs (Kame'enui & Simmons, 2000). The audit uses a 100-point scale divided across seven areas (e.g., goals and priorities, assessment) to quantify a school's current state of practice and the resulting data provides a first step in identifying areas of improvement. The tool's purpose is to quantify and develop awareness of a school's current policies and practices in beginning reading. Figure 4 presents items from the Administration, Organization, and Communication element of the tool (see next page). As indicated, respondents complete six items in this area using a 0 - 2 scale (i.e., 0 = not in place, 1 = partially in place, and 2 = fully in place) and document evidence to support the rating. Schools work in grade-level teams or representative teams to evaluate prevailing practices and complete the seven components. The process can be unifying and instructive as teachers and administrators work together to take inventory of their schools' reading disposition. For example, from the items illustrated, schools may realize that while they have a principal who is highly knowledgeable of state standards and priorities and works effectively with staff to create a coherent plan for reading instruction, the coordination of instruction across Title I, special education, and general education may not be complementary and even insufficient to realize schoolwide performance goals. Discussion of how to use this tool follows (See Stage II).

Figure 4: Example of items from Planning and Evaluation Tool for Effective Schoolwide Reading Programs (Kame'enui & Simmons, 2000)

0 Not in place 1 Partially in place 2 Fully in place

EVALUATION CRITERIA	**DOCUMENTATION OF EVIDENCE**
VI. Administration/Organization/Communication—Strong instructional leadership maintains a focus on high-quality instruction, organizes and allocates resources to support reading, and establishes mechanisms to communicate reading progress and practices.	
2 1. Administrators are knowledgeable of state standards, priority reading skills and strategies, assessment measures and practices, and instructional programs and materials.	
2 2. Administrators work with staff to create a coherent plan for reading instruction and institute practices to attain school reading goals.	
2 3. Administrators maximize and protect instructional time and organize resources and personnel to support reading instruction, practice, and assessment.	
2 4. Grade-level teams are established and supported to analyze reading performance and plan instruction. **1** 5. Concurrent instruction (e.g., Title I, special education) is coordinated with and complementary to general education reading instruction.	
1 6. A communication plan for reporting and sharing student performance with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders is in place.	

10 /12 Total Points: **80 %**

Percent of Implementation:

6 = 50% 10 = 80% 12 = 100%

Stage II: Analyze School and Student Performance

Identify reading priorities and develop an action plan. In Stage II, Reading First schools will review results of the school wide audit conducted in Stage I (See Figure 4). Results of the audit quantify what is in place, what is partially in place, and what is not in place along a range of critical dimensions (e.g., reading goals and objectives, assessment tools and strategies, instructional programs). The audit provides information at three levels: (a) an overall score based on a total of 100 points that indicates relative ranking toward a standard, (b) dimension scores (i.e., curriculum programs and instruction, professional development), and (c) individual item scores (e.g., Is there a commonly articulated and understood set of goals in reading for each grade?). After reviewing and completing all items in the audit, schools summarize their overall level of reading implementation quantitatively (See sample, Figure 5 and 6), prioritize areas of improvement, and develop an "Action Plan" to direct schoolwide beginning reading improvement.

Figure 5: Sample summary of level of reading improvement from school audit

Element	**Score**	**Percent**
I. Goals/ Objectives/ Priorities	11.5/14	81.4%
II. Assessment	11.8/20	59.0%
III. Instructional Practices and Materials	15.0/22	68.0%
IV. Instructional Time	8.0/14	57.0%
V. Differentiated Instruction/Grouping	5.5/10	55.0%
VI. Administration/ Organization/ Communication	10.6/12	88.0%
VII. Professional Development	4.5/8	56.0%
Total Score	**66.9/100**	**67.0%**

As the percentile scores reflect in Figure 5, this school rated itself high in administration (88%) and goals (81%) and low in differentiated grouping (55%), instructional time (57%), and assessment (59%). The resulting priorities from this audit included (a) using assessment data to establish flexible grouping to provide differentiated instruction, (b) allowing time to share this information and inservice for all teachers regarding the assessment system and instructional implications, and (c) implementing assessments three times per year in phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency and once per year in vocabulary and reading comprehension to assess progress and determine the need for strategic and intensive interventions. These priorities are documented in an action plan (See sample, Figure 6) and are used to guide reading improvement for the academic year.

Figure 6: A sample action plan of instructional priority.

PLANNING AND EVALUATION TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLWIDE BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS

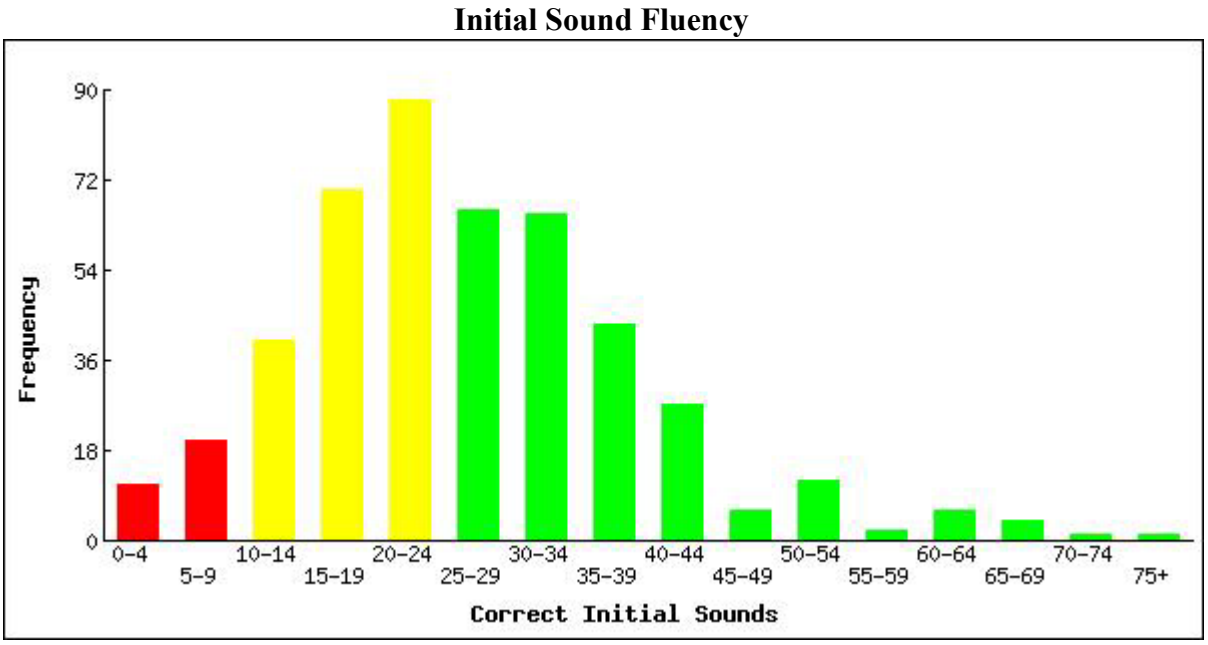
1. **Prioritization and Action**— Based on the previous listing of areas to improve, rank order three areas. The areas may include one element or items from several different elements.

Priority #1	**Action Plan**	**Who & When?**
To use screening and diagnostic assessment data to establish flexible grouping to provide differentiated instruction to benchmark, strategic, and intensive groups.	Teachers review data to establish instructional groups.	Classroom teachers 8/9/04
Priority #2	**Action Plan**	**Who & When?**
To allow time to share this information and inservice with other assessment data and the essential components of reading instruction. To continuously analyze our program and make changes as needed.	Review information in first faculty meeting.	Classroom teachers 8/9/04
Priority #3	**Action Plan**	**Who & When?**
To implement assessment timelines and measurements to determine instructional needs and interventions.	Develop schedule and assessment team.	Classroom, resource, and grade-level teachers 8/9/04

2. **Support Team Members and Schedule**—Identify the date, time, and place for the next schoolwide reading meeting.

Analyze individual performance and plan instructional groups. In Stage II, schools examine each learner's performance on critical prereading and reading skills to determine the scope and scale of instructional needs. On DIBELS measures, the web-based reports provide grade-level summary reports in the form of histograms that indicate the number of children by level of proficiency on a specific measure (See sample, Figure 7). In this example, all children enrolled in first grade were administered the Initial Sound Fluency Measure (ISF) of the DIBELS in January of 2001.

Figure 7 Sample Grade 1 January 2001 DIBELS Initial Sound Fluency Histogram; District Summary



Benchmark Goal: The benchmark goal is for all children to have phonological awareness skills of 25 to 35 on Initial Sound Fluency by the middle of Kindergarten.

January Status: In the middle of Kindergarten, students should have 25-35 initial sounds per minute on Initial Sound Fluency.

50% (n=233) Established

Students scoring 25 to 35 initial sounds per minute have established skills with the initial sounds in words. They typically are able to select words starting with a target sound and produce the initial sound in words. For students who have established Initial Sound Fluency, assessment and instructional focus should shift to Phoneme Segmentation Fluency. For these students, progress toward benchmark goals should be checked at the end of Kindergarten to ensure adequate growth.

43% (n=198) Emerging

Students scoring between 10 and 24 initial sounds per minute in the middle of Kindergarten have emerging initial sound skills. Students with emerging initial sound skills are likely to need additional instructional support in phonemic awareness to achieve benchmark goals. Progress toward benchmark goals should be monitored monthly.

7% (n=31) Deficit

Children scoring below 10 initial sounds per minute in the middle of Kindergarten have a deficit in initial sound skills. For children with a deficit in initial sounds, intensive intervention in phonemic awareness may be needed to achieve benchmark goals. Progress toward benchmark goals should be monitored at least every 2 weeks.

From the information on DIBELS performance, schools can determine which children have already reached benchmark goals and which have not (See Figure 8). Moreover, school-based Reading First teams and teachers can identify children who are at risk of not meeting benchmark goals. Benchmark goals indicate a level of performance on a particular measure that (a) establishes a solid, fluent proficiency and (b) forecasts future performance on higher-order skills. For example, reading 60 correct words per minute in the spring of first grade strongly correlates with reading 90 correct words per minute in the spring of second grade (Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001).

Figure 8: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills and R-CBM measures benchmark levels and goals

First Grade DIBELS Benchmark Goals

DIBELS Measure	Beginning of Year		Middle of Year		End of Year	
	Performance	**Status**	**Performance**	**Status**	**Performance**	**Status**
Letter Naming Fluency	LNF < 25 25 ≤ LNF < 37 LNF ≥ 37	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk				
Phonemic Segmentation Fluency	PSF < 10 10 ≤ PSF < 35 PSF ≥ 35	Deficit Emerging Established	PSF < 10 10 ≤ PSF < 35 PSF ≥ 35	Deficit Emerging Established	PSF < 10 10 ≤ PSF < 35 PSF ≥ 35	Deficit Emerging Established
Nonsense Word Fluency	NWF < 13 13 ≤ NWF < 24 NWF ≥ 24	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	NWF < 30 30 ≤ NWF < 50 NWF ≥ 50	Deficit Emerging Established	NWF < 30 30 ≤ NWF < 50 NWF ≥ 50	Deficit Emerging Established
Oral Reading Fluency			ORF < 8 8 ≤ ORF < 20 ORF ≥ 20	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	ORF < 20 20 ≤ ORF < 40 ORF ≥ 40	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk

Second Grade DIBELS Benchmark Goals

DIBELS Measure	Beginning of Year		Middle of Year		End of Year	
	Performance	**Status**	**Performance**	**Status**	**Performance**	**Status**
Oral Reading Fluency	ORF < 26 26 ≤ ORF < 44 ORF ≥ 44	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	ORF < 52 52 ≤ ORF < 68 ORF ≥ 68	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	ORF < 70 70 ≤ ORF < 90 ORF ≥ 90	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk

Third Grade DIBELS Benchmark Goals

DIBELS Measure	Beginning of Year		Middle of Year		End of Year	
	Performance	**Status**	**Performance**	**Status**	**Performance**	**Status**
Oral Reading Fluency	ORF < 53 53 ≤ ORF < 77 ORF ≥ 77	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	ORF < 67 67 ≤ ORF < 92 ORF ≥ 92	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	ORF < 80 80 ≤ ORF < 110 ORF ≥ 110	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk

Individual student performance on DIBELS and R-CBM is compared to the benchmark goals to identify children who require strategic or intensive intervention to reach benchmark goals (see Figure 11). Performance expectations are derived from research based criterion levels of performance (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992; Good et al., 2000), and students are identified for strategic or intensive intervention relative to how other students in their school perform and in comparison to research-based criteria. For example, a child entering first grade scoring less than 20 letter sounds per minute on the Nonsense-Word Fluency measure may require an intensive intervention, as the target criterion for the mid first grade benchmark is 50 correct letter-sounds per minute. Likewise, a student exiting second grade reading 40 words correct per minute may require a very intensive intervention, as the end-of-year target for correct words per minute is 90.

Children who are at greatest risk are identified from those at less risk. To operationalize this process, we use the following criteria.

Diagnostic Assessments

Students who require strategic or intensive interventions based on their performance on the screening measures are administered diagnostic measures to help establish specific areas of instructional need. Diagnostic measures are used in conjunction with teacher judgment during day-to-day instructional interactions to specify appropriate supplemental materials for use in strategic interventions and to plan individualized programs for students receiving intensive interventions. The mandatory measures that will be available for diagnosing instructional need are presented in Table I. For example, in the case of vocabulary and reading comprehension, data from the same measures that will be used to screen students and can be used for diagnostic purposes. With phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, additional measures will be administered for diagnostic purposes. (See Table 1 for mandatory site assessments).

Table I: Mandatory Site Assessment Measures

Measures by Essential Reading Components	**Screening**				**Diagnosis**				**Progress Monitoring**				**Outcome Assessments**			
Grade	K	1	2	3	K	1	2	3	K	1	2	3	K	1	2	3
Phonemic Awareness																
DIBELS 6th Ed.																
Initial Sound Fluency	X								X				X			
Phoneme Seg. Fluency	X	X							X	X			X	X		
Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)						X	X	X					X	X	X	X
Phonics																
DIBELS 6th Ed.																
Letter Naming Fluency	X	X							X	X			X	X		
Nonsense word Fluency	X	X	X						X	X	X		X	X		
Woodcock-Johnson III Basic Reading Cluster																
Letter- Word Identification	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X
Word Attack	X	X	X		X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X
Fluency																
DIBELS 6th Ed.																
Oral Reading Fluency		X	X	X						X	X	X		X	X	X
Gray Oral Reading Test IV (GORT IV): RATE		X	X	X		X	X	X						X	X	X
Vocabulary																
Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement																
Reading Vocabulary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Picture vocabulary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reading Comprehension																
Woodcock-Johnson III test of Achievement																
Passage Comprehension		X	X	X		X	X	X						X	X	X
Oral Comprehension		X	X	X		X	X	X						X	X	X
Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)							X	X			X	X			X	X

Students benefiting from benchmark reading intervention. In the following discussion, we assign a label to the type of intervention that is indicated by a student's performance rather than assign a label to the learner. This may appear a subtle shift but one we consider important. Our focus is to use student's performance on screening measures to help design the type of intervention necessary to change learning outcomes. Therefore, we focus on the intervention as opposed to the learner. Further, we use the term intervention, rather than instruction program or practice, as intervention consists of multiple components. These dimensions will be discussed further in Stage III.

Benchmark interventions are those instructional practices in general education that rely on comprehensive beginning reading programs, and that position students to meet or exceed commonly agreed upon reading goals and priorities. By design, they are intended to ensure that the majority of students in a given school achieve adequate (i.e., benchmark) levels of performance. The elements of benchmark intervention vary across schools, but the common factor is that the majority of students derive adequate benefit to pass school-, district-, and state - level assessments of reading. As a general rule, we suggest that benchmark intervention should prepare 80% or more of students in a school to read at grade level. The 80% criterion is a logical cut point. If more than 20% of students fail to reach benchmarks at designated intervals (see Figure 8), then the comprehensive reading program and practices are not adequately addressing the schools' needs. Recent studies synthesized by Lyon (1998; 2001) and colleagues at the National Institute of Child, Health, and Human Development indicate that a reasonable estimate is that 20% of children in schools will experience significant reading difficulties.

Students who attain benchmark performance on critical literacy skills (e.g., 35-45 phonemes per minute by the end of kindergarten) are on track to attain later reading outcomes (Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001). On phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency, students receiving benchmark intervention are monitored three times a year in the fall, winter, and spring on relevant DIBELS measures to evaluate growth toward common goals. If a child's performance does not maintain adequate growth toward benchmark goals, appropriate interventions are provided. Students will also be assessed three times per year in vocabulary and reading comprehension. In addition, student performance on R-CBM will also be used as a possible indicator of vocabulary and reading comprehension problems.

Students in need of strategic intervention.
Students who receive strategic intervention typically are not acquiring and demonstrating foundational reading skills at high levels and rates of success. They may begin moderately below their average-achieving peers in critical areas or may start at adequate levels but fail to progress over time. For students who are not grasping and applying grade-level reading skills and strategies proficiently and fluently, we recommend more explicit, systematic, and timely intervention and monitoring. In general, strategic intervention is designed for students who need more than is typical of the general education curriculum and instruction.

Of the 20% of children who are likely to have difficulty in beginning reading, we reason that approximately 75% (15% of the total number of students) may need additional, strategic instructional support. Students in the strategic intervention group may exhibit mixed performance patterns; that is, some may perform well on one measure but low on another, while others may perform moderately below average on a range of measures. In some schools, students requiring strategic intervention may constitute a large number of students, while in other schools they may be a small number. The goal of strategic intervention is to identify children who are potentially at

risk of serious reading difficulty and to provide sufficient systematic instruction, delivered primarily through the use of more specialized supplemental materials, so that their performance rapidly reaches and exceeds benchmark levels. Shinn (1997) recommends frequent monitoring for students who are failing to demonstrate adequate rates of progress. In the Schoolwide Reading Improvement Model, students who are receiving strategic interventions in phonemic awareness, phonics, or reading fluency will have their progress assessed monthly.

Students who are receiving strategic interventions in vocabulary and reading comprehension specifically will have their progress monitored three times per year (as will all students in Reading First classrooms). More frequent monitoring than that for students receiving instructional interventions, though desirable, is not feasible given the length of administration time.

Students in need of intensive intervention.

Intensive intervention is recommended for students who are significantly at risk based on their extremely low performance on one or more measures of the essential instructional components in beginning reading. The greater the number of measures on which performance is low and the lower the performance across measures, the greater the risk. The need for immediate intensive intervention becomes more urgent when students display continued low rates of progress even when provided with strategic intervention. With effective benchmark and strategic intervention in place in the primary grades, it is estimated that approximately five percent of students would need intensive intervention (Torgesen, 2000).

Much like children with serious medical conditions, children in need of intensive intervention in reading are in acute need of early identification, the most effective interventions available, and frequent monitoring to ensure their reading performance does not remain seriously low. Educators must intervene with a sense of urgency and with the most effective tools and strategies available. Moreover, the intensive interventions should be short-term and temporary, rather like an intensive care unit in a hospital.

As illustrated in Stage II, student level of the model, children with similar performance profiles are grouped according to intervention needs (i.e., benchmark, strategic, intensive). The purpose of grouping is to ensure that children are given ample opportunities to receive instruction and to respond at their instructional level. As a rule, the number of students who receive intensive instruction should be smaller than either the strategic or benchmark groups. Groups should be dynamic rather than static. Strategic, ongoing, and frequent monitoring of performance when students are grouped homogeneously has been demonstrated to contribute to overall achievement effects (Guitiérrez & Slavin, 1992) and is critical for adjusting groups in response to instruction and assessment.

As a rule, approximately 20% of students in the fall would require strategic or intensive intervention. Identifying 20% of children in the fall for intensive intervention may constitute "over identification;" however, the consequences of providing extra intervention is considered far less risky than a wait-and-see position that withholds opportunity for additional instruction until students are seriously discrepant from their peers.

In addition to the 20% criterion, we employ research-based guidelines on selected DIBELS measures that predict success. For instance, a first-grade student who can identify 50 or more letter-sounds correctly on the Nonsense-Word Fluency measure of DIBELS in the winter of

Grade 1 is highly likely to read 40 correct words per minute on R-CBM (Good,et al., 2000) in the Spring of Grade 1. The correlational nature of the DIBELS measures allows schools and teachers to make high-probability predictions of success and risk. For example, a mid-year first grader who identifies only nine correct letter sounds on the Nonsense-Word Fluency measure is at serious risk of not attaining the end-of-year first grade oral reading fluency benchmark of 40-60 correct words per minute and would warrant more instructional support than students performing in the benchmark range.

Stage III: Design Instructional Interventions

The critical features of Stage III, which is arguably the most important and complex component of the Schoolwide Beginning Reading Model—intervention. Of foremost importance to the model is the instructional fit of the instructional reading intervention within the school's host environment; therefore, schools invest serious and sustained energy at this stage. Stage III decisions focus on (a) specifying and implementing a comprehensive beginning reading program as the benchmark intervention and (b) customizing strategic and intensive interventions for students who are not benefiting adequately from the benchmark intervention.

Designing a benchmark intervention. Two principles guide decisions in Stage III: (a) interventions are bigger than programs alone, and (b) identification and implementation of a research-based comprehensive beginning reading program provides the highest probability of success in the host environment. A common misperception is that once a comprehensive beginning reading program is identified and adopted, the reading intervention is "determined." Comprehensive beginning reading programs constitute a critical component of a schoolwide model, but, as documented in Stage III; Figure 3, benchmark intervention encompasses far more than adoption of an instructional program. The entire benchmark intervention begins with the review and adoption of grade-level goals. These goals may be state- or locally mandated standards or in some cases they may be school determined. Specifying grade-level expectations for all students is fundamental to benchmark intervention and provides the basis for other decisions. For example, if a kindergarten content standard is that students will be able to segment 2- and 3 -phoneme words, the comprehensive program should address this standard adequately and fully. Moreover, standards should specify the level of performance students should achieve. An example first-grade performance goal is "students will orally read 60 correct words per minute on grade-level text." Goal specification is a critical dimension of the schoolwide inventory (e.g., Planning and Evaluation Tool, Kame'enui & Simmons, 1999) conducted in Stage I and many schools allocate significant time specifying expectations for K-3 reading.

Once goals are specified and the magnitude of the school's need is evaluated in relation to the goals, school teams design the optimal school-level intervention that fits their host environment. Reading First school teams consist ideally of all professionals in the school who are responsible for reading achievement including the general education teachers, school administrators, school psychologist, speech and language specialist, Title I or reading support teacher, etc. In Stage III, school teams essentially move beyond "what does reading instruction look like in our school" to "what should reading instruction look like in our school?" Critical decisions such as time allocations for reading, instructional grouping procedures, who delivers instruction, where instruction is delivered, and so on are considered and specified explicitly. Schools invest considerable time designing this intervention map, document their plan of action in writing, and review this map at critical decision points throughout the year. In essence, the outcome of Stage

III is an intervention map that specifies what comprehensive instruction looks like for students in Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2 and beyond.

Central to the instructional or intervention map is the selection of the research-based comprehensive program that fits the host environment or school. Reading First schools will select from a list of approved programs reviewed by multiple states Reading Curriculum Review Panels, such as Florida, Alabama, and Oregon. These programs will have solid, scientific evidence supporting their use and evidence supporting their ability to produce strong and positive results for children when implemented with fidelity.

A mentor coach and principal will work with collaborative grade-level intervention teams in initial intervention development and adaptation. Throughout the intervention process, collaborative intervention teams construct or customize the intervention from a menu of validated options. It is this "fit" within the school that further distinguishes this model from more traditional reading models.

Customize intensive and strategic interventions.
With the comprehensive reading intervention in place, the next set of decisions involves how to customize interventions for students who require strategic or intensive interventions to reach desired performance standards. This customizing will begin with analyzing student data on the diagnostic assessment, which provides an analysis of the students' instructional needs. Then, based on these needs, questions such as "Can the comprehensive beginning reading program be used, but in smaller groups?" "Could the student benefit from more instruction either through a longer period or an extra period of instruction, but with more use of a supplemental program?" "Could preteaching critical lesson components such as new phonic elements or story vocabulary result in adequate progress?" These questions relate to customization. In some cases, primarily strategic interventions, students may require supplemental materials that focus prominently on the essential instructional components of beginning reading. In other cases, customization may involve adding a second reading period. The degree and kind of customization must be determined at the school level and governed by student need, school resources, programs, and personnel.

Stage IV: Set Goals and Monitor Progress Formatively
The efficacy of the schoolwide model hinges largely on the ability of a school to document whether students are learning enough (Carnine, 1997). In Stage IV, schools assess all students' reading progress and evaluate each student's progress. A school's ability to document and act upon individual student performance dynamically, reliably, and formatively distinguishes it from the way the majority of schools use student performance data. Although norm-referenced, commercially-published measures of reading achievement do an adequate job of documenting groups of learners' performance at a given point in time (e.g., spring of year), these measures were not designed to monitor progress frequently and formatively over time or to provide information that can be used for instructional purposes.

Establish and implement a progress-monitoring system.
A key feature of the Schoolwide Beginning Reading Improvement Model is the essential linkage between assessment and instruction. This linkage is predicated on a simple but vital proposition: In the case of the DIBELS measures, we have valid, reliable, and efficient (one minute to administer) measures that when given early in a child's beginning literacy experience serve as powerful predictors (see appendix VII) of later reading success or risk. Two of the instructional

components for which the DIBELS measures can be used to monitor progress— phonemic awareness, and phonics—are critical in kindergarten and first grade, and the third—reading fluency—is critical in Grades 1, 2, and 3. Moreover, when the DIBELS measures are administered frequently, they can document student progress or lack thereof. For any school attempting to in serve all students, which requires serving each student, this is a powerful proposition with practical implications.

An effective and efficient progress-monitoring system consists of five critical factors: (a) reliable and valid measures with alternate forms that can be administered frequently, (b) established absolute and relative learning targets to e valuate whether the rate and slope of learning is adequate, (c) resources and personnel to prepare assessment materials, administer and score measures, and enter data, (d) a confirmed and commonly agreed upon schedule for collecting data, and (e) an efficient process for analyzing, summarizing, and reporting data to constituencies and for using student performance to inform instruction. Integrating assessment and instruction is not a novel concept and has long been a signature of effective special education (Deno, 1992; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). What is innovative and effective about this process is that the technology can be applied at the school level in time to catch children before they fail (Torgesen, 1998). At the present time, Kame'enui, Simmons and Good have built a website through which schools enter DIBELS and R-CBM data and immediately receive reports of student performance at the school and classroom levels, and if desired, at the district level. Information from these reports include the percentage of students at benchmark, strategic, and intensive intervention levels and class profiles delineating the individual performance of each learner across measures.

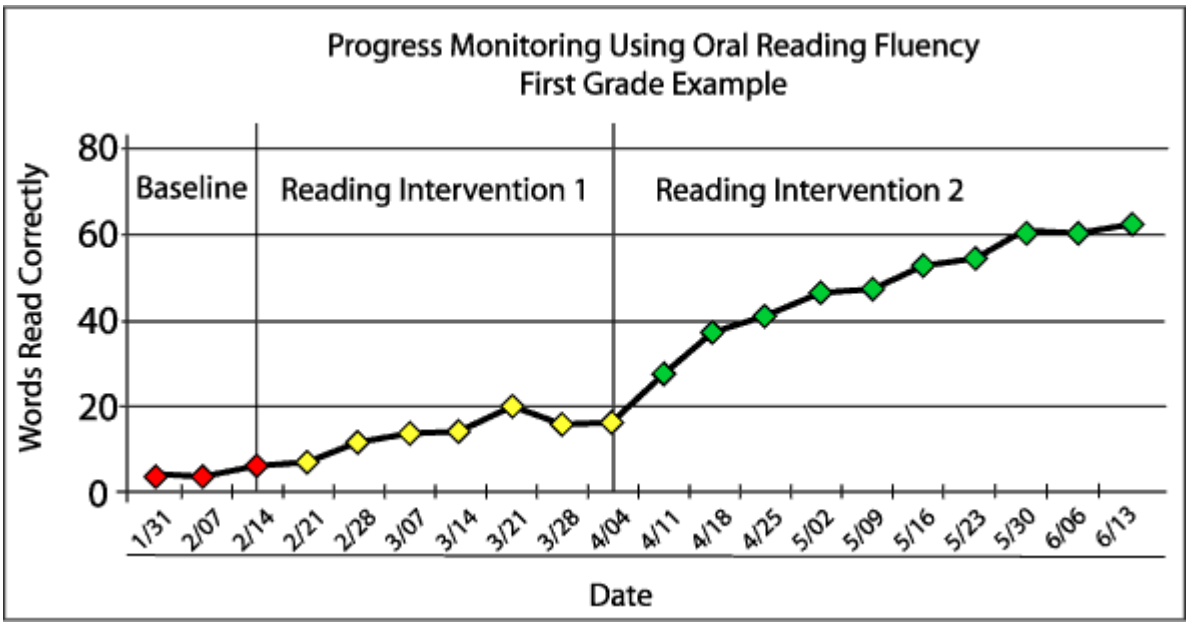
In summary, the schoolwide system of monitoring student performance and how to use the formative assessment system for students who are at greater risk of reading failure than the majority of children in the school is an essential element in a beginning reading improvement model.

Customize progress-monitoring system for intensive and strategic interventions.
For children who are receiving strategic or intensive interventions, it is important that their progress is monitored more frequently than students in the benchmark intervention group. For students who are having difficulty in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency, this is possible using the DIBELS measures. For students who are having difficulty in vocabulary and reading comprehension, the R-CBM measures will be used as one method of frequent progress monitoring because of the very strong relationship between oral reading fluency and vocabulary, and oral reading fluency and comprehension (Fuchs et al., 2000). In the areas of vocabulary and reading comprehension, the subtest of the Woodcock Johnson III Test of Achievement will be used to monitor progress in vocabulary, and the DRA will monitor progress in the area of reading comprehension.

The DIBELS measures can be administered more frequently to students receiving strategic and intensive interventions than even the three times per year that will be used with all students. Alternate forms of the same measures used for screening will be used for frequent progress monitoring. The primary difference between the benchmark assessments (i.e., three times per year) and the strategic and intensive progress monitoring is the frequency of administration and analysis. At the school level, all students are assessed three times per year to determine progress. Students in strategic interventions will be monitored monthly, and students in intensive interventions will be monitored more frequently (e.g., every 2-4 weeks). Learning targets are established, and each learner's performance on target goals is documented. The following graphic

depicts one first grade student's monthly progress on the Oral Reading Fluency measure. The student whose performance is reflected in Figure 9 was identified at the beginning of the year as needing intensive intervention based on his performance on oral reading fluency measure of DIBELS. As indicated in the graph, he met the end-of-first grade goal of 40-60 words per minute in April and continued to make progress through June. Through monthly monitoring, teachers can evaluate individual children's progress precisely and adjust instruction, if needed.

Figure 9:



Stage V: Evaluate Intervention Efficacy and Adjust Instruction

In the final stage of the model, the effects of intervention conducted in Stages I-IV are evaluated directly and interventions intensified as indicated by student performance. In this stage, schools address the following questions: Are the instructional interventions working for the full range of learners? Are students learning enough? What instructional adjustments must be made to enhance beginning reading performance?

Evaluate school-level performance.
Each school evaluates the performance of all students three times a year on phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency. On vocabulary and reading comprehension, reading fluency is used a proxy for progress, and two direct measures are administered three times per year (such as Picture Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension). Progress is reviewed at each grade to evaluate the efficacy of the instructional intervention in the respective grades. Classroom teachers also receive summaries of students in their classrooms to identify specific children who need more effective instructional interventions. An advantage of the DIBELS measures is that specific goals can be set on each measure and progress monitored frequently during the year to determine progress toward specific goals.

When many students do not reach target benchmarks, Reading First school teams return to the instructional interventions planned in Stage III. First, Reading First teams evaluate critical

dimensions of the strategic and intensive interventions to identify the source of the difficulty. First-order questions include:
(1) Was the intervention implemented as planned or prescribed?
(2) Did students receive the amount of intervention specified for the time allocated?
(3) Were there high rates of absence for many learners?
(4) Did the size of instructional groups permit adequate opportunities for students to respond?
(5) Was progress monitored frequently to evaluate learning?

If review of the comprehensive dimensions of intervention indicates one or more deviations from what was planned, procedures should be put in place to increase fidelity of the planned intervention. If analysis reveals that all intervention components were implemented as planned, school teams review the list of alterable variables to determine what and how much to intensify. If performance trends are positive and adequate for all but a few children, then large-scale intervention adjustment is not warranted. Only if many students are failing to progress adequately is full review and adjustment of the comprehensive intervention components necessary.

Intensify intervention. On progress monitoring measures administered three times per year, decisions about intensifying interventions will be based on performance at each of the measurement time points and on the growth students make on these measures over time. On measures collected at more than three time points during the year (i.e., the DIBELS measures), each classroom teacher and the Reading First mentor coach will review the data to determine which children are making insufficient progress to attain targeted proficiency goals on each of the relevant measures. From this information, teachers assess each child's performance on multiple measures to determine if the student's performance is deficit, emerging, or established. Instructional recommendations are then based on the number of essential skills on which the student is experiencing difficulty and the magnitude of their educational need.

The following winter report for a first-grade class illustrates a mid-first-grade goal of 35-45 phonemes per minute on the Phonemic Segmentation Fluency measures and 50 letter sounds per minute on the Nonsense-Word Fluency measure (See Figure 10). In this class, nine children (e.g., John, Gillian, Beth) are benefiting from benchmark intervention, that is, the comprehensive beginning reading program. Benchmark intervention is the instructional recommendation for all children who score (a) 35 or more on phonemic segmentation and (b) 50 or more on nonsense word fluency. Another four children require strategic intervention. The criteria for recommending strategic intervention is (a) 11-34 on phonemic segmentation fluency, or (b) 20-49 on nonsense word fluency, or (c) less than 10 words correct per minute on R-CBM or (d) any combination of a, b, or c. Four children are recommended for intensive intervention. Criteria for intensive intervention include scores of (a) less than 10 on phonemic segmentation fluency, (b) less than 20 on nonsense word fluency, or (c) less than 10 on R-CBM.

In addition to evaluating absolute performance (i.e., where a student scores at one point in time), it is important to evaluate growth as well as the nature of performance differences. For example, although Suzy and Mandy both are recommended for intensive intervention, Suzy made enormous growth on phonemic segmentation from fall (0) to winter (58) and on nonsense words (from 0 to 39). Yet, she read only four words correct on the RCBM measure; hence, the reason for the intensive intervention recommendation. Mandy, however, grew from 10 to 19 on phonemic segmentation and from 4 to 15 on nonsense words. Although the intervention recommendation is for both children, the type of instructional focus would differ.

As indicated in the Student Level component of Stage V, determining how to intensify intervention is essential in Stage V of the Schoolwide Beginning Reading Improvement Model. A first-order question for students identified in need of intensive and strategic intervention is, "Have these children been attending school and receiving instruction?" or are there obvious participation issues that shed light on their low progress or performance levels? Answers to these questions may explain the differential progress rates of children such as Suzy and Mandy. If low performance cannot be explained by attendance factors, teachers then review and intensify levels of intervention to increase the probability that students will make satisfactory rates of progress. Common adjustments used to intensify interventions are (a) increasing the amount of time by providing double doses of reading instruction, (b) reducing the size of the instructional group, (c) using a more specialized and explicit instructional program, and (d) monitoring progress more frequently. A table of alterable components and specific adjustments follows (See Table 2).

Figure 10: First Grade Winter DIBELS and R-CBM Benchmark Teacher Report

Teacher: Mrs. Smith **District:** ABC School District
Grade: 1 **School:** Henry Walter Elementary

	Letter Naming	Phonemic Segmentation			Nonsense Word Fluency			Oral Reading Fluency		Instructional Recommendation Based Primarily on Nonsense
Student	**Fall**	**Fall**	**Winter**	**Status**	**Fall**	**Winter**	**Status**	**Winter**	**Status**	
Andy	22	16	50	Established	33	38	*Emerging*	11	*Emerging*	Strategic instruction
John	31	13	62	Established	42	66	Established	42	Established	Benchmark instruction
Suzy	6	0	58	Established	0	39	*Emerging*	4	non-reader	Intensive Instruction
Erin	42	0	23	*Emerging*	29	37	*Emerging*	18	*Emerging*	Strategic instruction
George	25	11		na	7		na			na
Gillian	44	28	56	Established	47	52	Established	23	*Emerging*	Benchmark instruction
Beth	57	25	49	Established	27	56	Established	46	Established	Benchmark instruction
Jorge	16	1	47	Established	32	50	Established	7	non-reader	Strategic instruction
Mandy	20	10	19	*Emerging*	4	15	Deficit	7	non-reader	Intensive Instruction
Maria	55	55	47	Established	59	70	Established	36	*Emerging*	Benchmark instruction
Fred	46	22	42	Established	45	62	Established	74	Established	Benchmark instruction
Neil	39	31	40	Established	35	53	Established	27	*Emerging*	Benchmark instruction
Pedro	40	14	40	Established	13	14	Deficit	13	*Emerging*	Intensive Instruction
Deborah	24	17	24	*Emerging*	39	17	Deficit	13	*Emerging*	Intensive Instruction
Edward	50	48	50	Established	49	48	*Emerging*	49	Established	Benchmark instruction
Katie	72	57	72	Established	40	57	Established	40	Established	Benchmark instruction
Josh	63	31	63	Established	50	31	*Emerging*	50	Established	Strategic instruction
Dave	36	24	50	Established	35	49	*Emerging*	27	*Emerging*	Benchmark instruction

Summary of Schoolwide Beginning Reading Improvement Model

Schoolwide beginning reading improvement involves the integration of two complex systems: (a) the scientific knowledge base of reading in an alphabetic writing system, and (b) the design and implementation of the knowledge base in a complex host environment (i.e., schools) comprised of people, practices, pedagogy, and policy. We advocate that the processes and procedures required to effect and sustain reading improvement are fundamentally the same whether the school is an inner city school in Anchorage or a rural school in Western Alaska. The translation of the knowledge base of beginning reading from the research literature to practice in schools is built on and nurtured by a common set of components operationalized in the five stages of the Schoolwide Beginning Reading Improvement Model.

Table 2: Alterable Components and Specific Adjustments Used To Intensify Intervention

Alterable Components	**Components Specific Adjustments**				
Opportunities to Learn	Development plan to increase attendance	Ensure instruction is provided daily	Increase number of opportunities for learner to respond	Increase teacher-directed instruction	Add another instructional period (double dose)
Program Efficacy	Pre-teach components of comprehensive program	Use supplemental materials that extend the comprehensive program	Replace supplemental materials	Replace comprehensive program	Implement specially designed program
Program Implementation	Model lesson delivery	Monitor implementation frequently	Provide mentor coaching and ongoing support	Provide additional staff development	
Grouping for Instruction	Check if students appropriately placed	Reduce number of students in group	Provide individual instruction	Change instructor	
Coordination of Instruction	Clarify instructional priorities	Establish concurrent reading periods/sessions	Provide complementary reading instruction across reading periods	Establish a communication system across instructors	

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Appendix I: Alaska Mentor Standards

Appendix II Proposed Alaska Professional Development Standards

Appendix III Quality School Team Leader (QSTL) Directory

Appendix IV School Readiness Tool

Appendix V Consumers Guide to Evaluation Core Reading Curriculum

Appendix VI Planning and Evaluation Tool for Effective Schoolwide Reading Programs

Appendix VII. DIBELS sample report

Appendix VIII Alaska Reading First Timeline

Appendix IX Sample Reading First Site Budget

Appendix X: Draft LEA Application

Appendix XI: Assessment Evaluation